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EARLY BIBLE SONGS

A. H. DRYSDALE.

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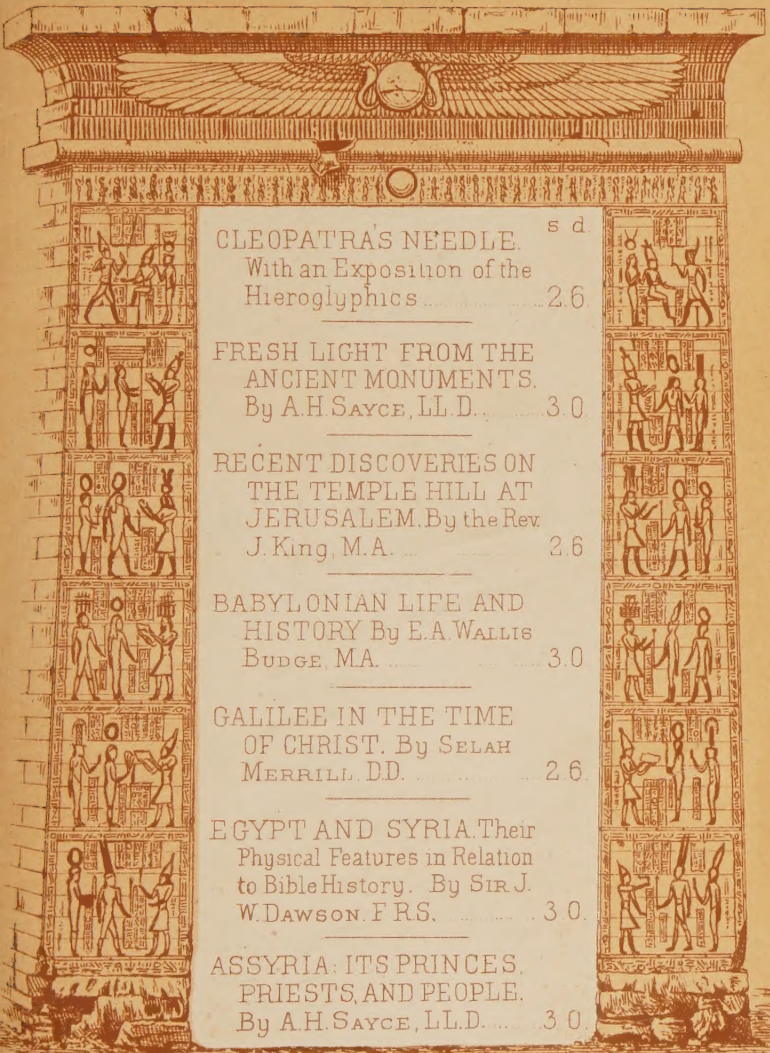

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EARLY BIBLE SONGS.

'Yet these frequent songs throughout the Law and Prophets, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made to appear over all other kinds of lyric poesy to be *incomparable*.'

MILTON.

By-Paths of Bible Knowledge

XV.

EARLY BIBLE SONGS

WITH INTRODUCTION ON THE NATURE AND SPIRIT OF HEBREW SONG

BY

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1837

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PREFACE.

A REVIVED interest in Old Testament subjects is a pleasing feature of these times. One of the aims of this little book is partly to meet and partly to stimulate this growing taste. It does not look at the subjects with which it deals simply from the point of view of the specialist, but attempts rather to popularize the best and latest results of scholarship, and convey intelligence upon these Bible Songs. Higher criticism has started grave and delicate questions respecting the structure, history, and literary composition of Old Testament Scripture. A yet higher scholarship will duly set all these matters in their proper light, honestly dealing with them in the spirit of fearless research. For here, as elsewhere, 'the torch of truth, the more it's shook it shines'; and nothing but good can ultimately come of the most sifting processes, when these are conducted with a reverent simplicity that aims at 'truth in love.' The wheat is preserved, and only the chaff gets blown away.

Meanwhile it is needful to keep the popular mind as far as possible in touch with what is going forward, to prepare it for welcoming all fresh light on Old Testa-

ment subjects, and, if need be, for revising and reconsidering any ill-founded preconceptions. In the following pages the critical is necessarily subordinated to the spiritual; historical and other literary matter being made subservient to the higher aim of vivifying the ideas, and enforcing the principles of these 'Early Bible Songs.'

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INTRODUCTION.

SCATTERED over the Old Testament Historical Books are certain hymns, battle-songs, and other pieces of a lyrical order. Some of these are merely fragmentary relics snatched from oblivion or extracted from records no longer in existence, such as *The Book of Jasher*, or the *Book of the Wars of the Lord*; while others of them are contemporaneous with the narrative and have been preserved complete. But whatever their origin, or however they have been produced, their common name is *shîr* [1], a very ancient name for *song*, with kindred forms in Sanscrit, Arabic, and other tongues.

1. Shîr, or Song-poetry in Historical Scripture.—Five poetic pieces in the historical books have this word shîr attached to them. First is the *Song of Moses at the Red Sea* [2]—the great redemptive song, type of every song of salvation: called by the Jews emphatically '*The* Song,' and linked by ourselves in association with that other which is to mingle with it, *The Song of Moses and the Lamb*. It is the song of Israel's nativity. The night had found them a mass of affrighted African slaves: the morning looked out on them a commonwealth of the free, on their ancestral Asiatic soil. The nation was born in a day. Henceforward they appear above the horizon a distinct and historic people; and what is more, they become the emblem of a ransomed and triumphant Church, the Church of the redeemed.

[1] Pronounced *sheerr*.

[2] Exodus xv.

What an epoch therefore this song describes and signalises in Israel's Calendar! No wonder it holds so chief a place in Jewish ritual, and is recited to this hour with such joy and fervour in their synagogues, on the seventh Passover day, the traditional anniversary of their crossing the Red Sea. What a billowy outburst of irrepressible praise and triumph it is, with wave after wave of exultant and prophetic delight and glorying in the Lord! In every sense it is the foremost song in the great cycle of Hebrew anthology; the fit prelude of all succeeding Psalms and Hymns.

The second *shîr* is the brief but bright-sparkling *Song of the Well*—'the well whereof the LORD said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water [1].' It was the first well dug on the border of their inheritance; and the little chant, doubtless a favourite one with water-drawers afterwards, celebrates the unity of spirit and the happy co-operation among the tribes. 'Then sang Israel this song:—

> 'Spring up, O well: sing ye unto it:
> The well, the princes digged:
> The nobles of the people delved it
> With the sceptre, with their staves.'

The third piece to which *shîr* is prefixed is that mighty and majestic Deuteronomic strain, the farewell song of Moses [2]—

> 'Full of hope and yet of heartbreak.
> . . . . . .
> Full of all the tender pathos
> Of the here and the hereafter,'

with its series of pictures for the popular imagination, and its array of solemnizing figures to school and chasten a stiff-necked people. It is the final legacy of Moses to

[1] Numbers xxi. 16. [2] Deuteronomy xxxii.

Israel, 'his last and lasting'st piece—a song,' that they might learn to con and hum it everywhere,

> 'Because he knew they would let fall
> The Law, the Prophets and the History;
> But keep the song, still, in their memory.'

The fourth and fifth examples of a *shîr* are the martial ode of Deborah [1] and the royal Davidic song [2], which reappears as a Psalm—the eighteenth—with variations [3].

But while these five are each called a shîr, there are several other pieces in the historical books to which the term is not inapplicable, though it is not expressly attached to them. Such are Lamech's remarkable effusion, called by some the *Song of the Sword* [4], and that other outburst of bitterness and war-hate, the satirical *flame-song of Heshbon* [5]; as well as some of a very different spirit and order, like the Old Testament *Magnificat*, the *Song of Hannah* [6]; or the *Last Words of David* [7]; and the grand elegy or funeral dirge over Saul and Jonathan, commonly called the *Song of the Bow* [8]; with several other fragmentary relics.

Poetry which is meant to be sung or to have musical accompaniment is the distinctive idea of the Hebrew *shîr*, as of the Greek *ode* or our own *song* [9]. The word most naturally applies to what is joyful or gladsome in tone, yet not to the exclusion by any means of solemn or melancholy strains. Music touches, and is the exponent of both sides of human feeling, the glad and the sad;

[1] Judges v. [2] 2 Samuel xxii.

[3] In 1 Chron. xvi. 8–36 is a hymn of thanks by David, which is found distributed among Psalms cv. 1–15, xcvi. and cvi. 1 and 47, 48.

[4] Genesis iv. 23, 24. [5] Numbers xxi. 27–30.

[6] 1 Sam. ii. 1–10. [7] 2 Sam. xxiii. 1–7. [8] 2 Sam. i. 17–27.

[9] So close is the connection between song and musical accompaniment, which shîr expresses, that it is even used for the instrumental music itself. Thus in 1 Chron. xvi. 42 musical instruments are literally 'instruments of shîr,' or in Nehemiah xii. 27, cymbal music is 'the shîr of cymbals.'

and shîr in like manner may embrace the opposite poles of joy and sorrow, of hope and fear, of cheerful chant and plaintive wail. This is lyric, as distinguished from epic, dramatic, narrative or other poetry not meant to be musically set, but merely to be read or recited. Numerous classifications of Hebrew poetry have been suggested, but all on the lines of this fundamental distinction. Indeed there are only the two words which stand out with great prominence, Mâshal and Shîr: the distinction between them being very much that of poetry and song with ourselves—Mâshal being the name for poetic diction in general, including shîr or song itself, while the latter specifies what is distinctively designed for musical rendering, vocal or instrumental, or both combined [1]. Of both kinds the historical books afford ample illustrations, and the distinction is adequately marked. Thus the prophecies of Jacob and of Moses, concerning the twelve tribes [2], are real poetry both in spirit and form—anyone may see this by referring to them in the Revised Version—but they are not lyrical in tone or purpose. A briefer instance is afforded in the words of curse and blessing by Noah [3]—pure poetry in rhythmical form, but in no sense shîr or song. It is the earliest example of that lofty, measured utterance usual with the patriarchs in their inspired prophetic or benedictive moods. The effusions of Balaam are of the same type, and are couched in the same style, though they approach more nearly to the lyrical.

But the distinction between poetry and song may be illustrated on a wider scale, by referring to the three books of the Old Testament which are emphatically called poetical, and to which alone a full poetic accentua-

[1] *Mâshal* means properly a similitude, and points to the idea of poetry being rich in metaphor, an ebullition of strong figurative speech.

[2] Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii. [3] Gen. ix. 25–27.

tion belongs. These are—the Psalms (Thehillim), Proverbs (Mashelim), and Job (Eyob). According to the Jewish arrangement of the books, they are the first three of that series of twelve known as Kethúbim or Hagiographa. Their technical or mnemonic name is *Em'th*—a word devised to aid the memory, and made up, as the reader will observe, of the initial letters of the Hebrew names of these three books in reverse order. Now of these poetical books or *Em'th*, the Psalms alone are lyrical—supremely and uniquely so—whereas the other two, however poetical, are of a totally different style, and not at all lyrical[1].

2. Native Source and Well-head of Hebrew Song.—Poetry of some sort or other is the most primitive, as it is also the most advanced, style of literary expression. National literature usually begins with song, while yet the art of writing is unknown. Early laws, chronicles, and proverbs have a tendency to assume an alliterative or rhythmic form, which is so easily impressed and remembered. Traditions are handed down in simple ballads. Long before a tribe has emerged from barbarism it will have its bards to chant its highest and most sacred things. Lawgivers will give forth their precepts, and priests their oracles, in similar forms.

This is what catches the ear and strikes deep into the popular mind. The bard is naturally therefore the first historian and annalist. For what an aid to memory is verse! And what a spell it lays upon the fancy if wedded to some artless strain of music! This lends additional charm and

[1] It may be observed here that the earlier prophets, such as Joel, Isaiah and Habakkuk, are thoroughly poetical, with occasional lyric outbursts, while the others, like Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, become more prosaic in style as they grow later in date. The *Song of Songs* (Shîr Hash-Shirim), which immediately follows the *Em'th* or poetic books, is an idyllic lyric of a peculiar type.

throws an air of romantic dignity around events, stamping them with a living force. Poetry and music mingle with the soul and stir it to its very depths. 'Blest pair of Sirens, sphere-born harmonious sisters, voice and verse, able to *pierce* dead things with inbreathed sense.'

Music and poetry, voice and verse—these two blended together make song. And this is among the earliest and most promising tokens of a people's life. Young puissant nations are often born and cradled in song. Like streaks and gleams that herald the dawn, this shows that a dayspring is rising upon a people, and that they are rising with it. They will make a poem of their history; and their heroic deeds, when rendered vocal in song, will mould and nourish their growing destiny.

The Hebrews were intensely and by nature a lyrical people, and their language a lyrical tongue. Not being specially gifted as a race with the analytical faculties, they were not of an argumentative or speculative turn of mind. Their genius was for high sentiment and fervid emotion. Their mental processes were quick and flashing. What they saw clearly they felt intensely, and could express glowingly. Their preference was for the pictorial, and not the abstract style of utterance. Their ordinary speech was a kind of poetry, full of imagery and heart-passion. The Hebrew tongue lends itself with peculiar readiness to lyrical expression. 'Since action and re-action,' says Herder, 'are of the essence of poetry, and since the verb is the part of speech that depicts action, or rather that sets action directly before us, the language that is rich in expressive pictorial verbs is a poetic language, and is more poetic the more fully it can turn nouns to verbs . . . Now in Hebrew, almost everything is verb . . . the language is a very abyss of verbs.' And he adds, 'Everything in it cries aloud

"I live, I move, I work, I am the creature of emotion and conviction"; not the language of abstract thinkers or philosophers, but of the inspiration of the poet.'

Hebrew song flows, therefore, from a natural spring. It has a source and well-head in the lyrical nature and language of the people. Nor shall we rightly understand or interpret some things in the Old Testament Historical Books, without bearing in mind this lyrical genius and aptitude of the Hebrew people? This gift and the fruits of it were graciously utilised and directed, not overborne nor cast aside, by the Spirit of God in the construction of Sacred Scripture. For as revealed religion is rooted in and draws up within itself the original findings and primitive elements of natural religion, or as Christian piety incorporates the principles and instincts of the earliest child-piety, so the native characteristics of the Israelitish race are embodied and worked out in the divine literature of inspiration. It is the glory of creative wisdom to have produced such astonishing variety of vegetable and animal forms, all permeated by a unifying principle of life; so it is the glory of the Spirit of revelation to have preserved a rich variety of human characteristics and peculiarities, while breathing His own inspiration as the assimilating influence through them all. Room is found for, and ample expression given to, the calm methodical majesty of Moses; the impassioned glow and energy of David; the reflective generalization of Solomon; the subtlety of Paul; the lofty meditativeness of John; the practical habit of James; and the vehement force of Peter. And so, instead of tame monotony, we have rich variety on the page of Scripture, like the pleasing diversity of countenance and the changing play of feature over the human face divine. These early historic books of Old Testament Scripture

bear many distinctive traces of their Hebrew mould. How different in tone and construction from what they would have been among a differently constituted race! Not only are they imbued with varieties of poetic forms and style congenial to the Hebrew people, but they are inlaid with lyric gems, that are the piously preserved relics and *débris* of what was most characteristic of their national bent and genius.

3. The peculiar Structure of Hebrew Verse and Song.—Hebrew verse differs in no small degree from what would be called poetry either in classic or modern tongues. It does not, for example, consist of feet or of metre; still less does it exhibit rhyme; and least of all does it assume the mechanism of equally-divided stanzas. When printed as it ought to be, in proper lines, it has an appearance of something like blank verse; but it knows nothing of quantity or the art of scansion. Some have endeavoured to find in it something akin to hexameters, pentameters, anapaests, iambics and the like; but such methods of classical and modern versification seem wholly foreign to its nature. Hebrew poetry proceeds on another system altogether. Its rhythmic flow consists in an equilibrium, not of feet and syllables, but of clauses and sentences. It has its own alliterations or assonance, its repetitive sounds and catch-words, but these are subordinate to the general sway or swing of the main balance of harmony. Hebrew poetry depends on what is usually called *parallelism*: that is to say, a manifest correspondence both in sense and rhythmic expression between two sentences or two sections of a sentence, very much as if it were an utterance and some intelligent echo of it; thus—

'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice,
Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech.'

The parallelism or balance, it will be observed, is not in the *Sound* but in the *Sense* of the words. The equilibrium is not a correspondence of rhyme or metre, but of the expression or sentiment harmoniously assorted—the second line being made to fit into the first, and two such members being required to make up one poetical unit. This parallelism, or nice balancing of phrase, has been well called 'sense-rhythm' or 'thought-rhythm,' in contradistinction from 'rhyme' or 'metre'; the sense being more prominent than the sound, and the thought than the form of it. Such parallelism of course admits of various modifications, according as these rhythmical clauses stand related, in their meaning, to one another. There are three such parallelisms in general use, and commonly called *Synonymous*, *Antithetic*, and *Synthetic*. In the first, the parallelism is constituted by *reiterating*, in the second by *contrasting*, and in the third by *developing* the original sentiment. We may illustrate these distinctions by examples taken from the *Song of Moses* in Exodus xv.

1. *Synonymous, or simply reiterative parallelism*, where the same idea is just repeated, or a similar one is echoed in varied yet corresponding expressions. Thus in verse 2 of that chapter we have:

'My *own* God! and I will *praise* Him[1]
My *Father's* God! and I will *exalt* Him.'

2. *Antithetic parallelism*, where the ideas are set in contrast or opposition to each other. This prevails most in gnomic or proverbial contrasts, such as this:—

'A wise son makes a glad father,
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.'

[1] In the Authorised Version it reads—
'He *is* my God, and I will *prepare Him an habitation*;
My Father's God, and I will exalt Him.'
The parallelism pointed to the need of looking more carefully at the mean-

In lyrical pieces it is seen rather in sudden changes and transitions of thought, which bring the antagonism into bold relief. Thus in Exod. xv. 16 we find a double antithesis in its four parts:—

'Terror and dread falleth upon them:
By the greatness of Thine arm they are still as a stone—
Till Thy people pass over, O LORD,
Till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased'.'

3. *Synthetic parallelism*, where the second idea is a development of the first, or is set in co-ordination with it. This is the most lively form of parallelism. It abounds therefore in choral lyrics, specially in the more striking or vehement passages. Thus in Exod. xv. 1:—

'I-will-sing unto-the-LORD, for-He-is-exalted on-high
The-horse and-his-rider hath-He-thrown into-the-sea.'

Here again the hyphened expressions represent single words in the Hebrew, and show a fourfold combination in each line.

These three kinds of parallelism, though the most common and frequently recurring, do not exhaust all the varied combinations of which parallelism is susceptible. Many changes may be introduced at the option and taste of the writer, by making a difference in the length of the line, by manipulating the pause, and various other subordinate arrangements. Thus at verse 9 of the same chapter, we have alternate parallels, the first and third having only *two* and the second and fourth *four* expressions:—

ing of the word rendered 'prepare an habitation,' and the Revised Version has given the correct idea, as above.

[1] It may seem that such lines are very unequal; but in the Hebrew there are really just four words or phrases in each of the lines. The combination may be represented to the eye by the use of hyphens, thus:—

'Terror and-dread falleth upon-them
By-the-greatness of-Thine-arm they-are-still as-a-stone
Till Thy-people pass-over O LORD
Till the-people pass-over which-Thou-hast-purchased.'

'The-enemy said
I-will-pursue, I-will-overtake, I-will-divide the-spoil
My-lust shall-be-glutted-on-them
I-will-draw my-sword: my-hand shall-destroy-them.'

It is this 'thought' or 'sense' rhythm, with its simplicity, that makes Hebrew versification so congenial to other languages. It is a universal poetry that admits of easy translation into foreign tongues, and loses nothing by the process. Nothing at least has to be sacrificed to the importunities of rhyme or metre. However much one language may differ from another, Hebrew poetry is at home in them all—preserving in each the advantages both of rhythmic harmony and of naturalness of flow. For its structure depends more on sense than on sound. The substance is more than the setting. What is artificial is at its lowest. It is the movement rather than the form of the poetry that arrests us. Hence the simplest parallelisms are the most frequently recurring ones. The effect is as natural as the ebb and flow of the tide; as the voice and its echo; as the movement of the arms, or the beat of the wings, or as the rise and fall of the lungs—to all of which the Hebrew couplet has fitly been compared [1].

[1] Hebrew verse is too simple and natural not to have its affinities in other languages far enough removed in time and place from one another. Egyptologists assure us that sense-rhythms and parallelism are key-notes in the poetry of old Mizraim; and the recently deciphered specimens from ancient Assyrian bricks exhibit similar peculiarities. But it may bring the matter home to ourselves with more interest, if we observe how our own old Saxon verse proceeds upon a kindred system without rhyme or metre. Our modern versification is not derived from the Saxon at all. For rhyme was a Celtic habit, introduced through the Romance dialects into our literature in the fourteenth century by Chaucer, Gower, and other followers of the Italian and French poets; metre being an adaptation from the syllabic style of the Greek and Latin classics. What our Teutonic forefathers had for metre was a rhythmic accentuated double-couplet or parallelism, while for rhyme they used a recurring alliterative letter. Thus the ballad

4. Different forms of the Songs.—We have seen already that Mâshal is the general Hebrew word for poetic diction, including shîr or that class of poetry which is meant to be sung. Now Mâshal means properly a similitude or figure. It points to the idea that poetic diction was couched in metaphor. Poetry springs from fervour of thought and feeling. And it is to be noted that the most fervid words in Hebrew are just those which are most metaphoric and convey the most vivid and expressive images. With us, the poet, as an artist, must 'lisp in *numbers*'; but with the Hebrew people, caring little as they did for the merely artistic, he had to utter himself in *pictures* or *figures*. The prime essential in Hebrew poetry was an ebullition of strongly figurative or pictorial speech. Distinctions between prose and poetry are by no means so marked or rigorous in Hebrew as in a literature like our own. Even when historical writers rise into a higher and more excited mood than usual; when, for example, they deal with some animating subject or rehearse a dialogue in the direct form of speech (the speakers, that is to say, using the *first* person and not the third, as in indirect or reported form), they easily glide into a rhythmical or cantillating style, as if to relieve the pent-up emotion. When thought and feeling reach the excitation of musical pitch or of eager vehement gesture, the lyrical mood is

on Athelstan's victory at Brunanburgh, A. D. 937, would run in modernized form:—

'*E*ye on this *E*island
By *e*dge of *s*word
Writers of *E*ld
*E*nglish or *S*axons
Oer the *b*road *b*rine
Proud *w*orkers of *w*ar.
No *s*uch *s*ore *s*laughter
*e*ver hath *s*een,
as the book *s*ayeth
*s*ince from *e*ast hither
*s*ailed over *s*ea
landed in *B*ritain.'

The italics show the alliteration: and the reader will observe how a sentence may begin in the middle of a line, and how the right-hand half-line may be parallel with the next half on the left.

attained. Words come swiftly and intensely. Phrases are abbreviated and condensed, or they get iterated and reiterated as the soul of emphasis. The lyric, in its simplest form, expressing as it does some warm thought or strong impulse, is 'the daughter of the moment' (as Ewald says) 'the utterance of swift-rising powerful feelings, and of deep-stirring sentiments or emotions.' For when any lofty or vehement mental mood seizes some capable poetic nature with a force that refuses to be repressed or controlled, the whole being is caught up into a quivering ecstasy. The thought is embodied in strong metaphoric language and clothes itself in nervous repetitive expression. Ordinary utterance no longer suffices. It is too cold and slow. Speech rises into the acute shrill accents of passion; and then, breaking like a crested wave, it rolls over into a rhythmical sweep. The result leaves the impression of a supremely natural process, free and unforced, without servile study or mechanic art. And it was this simple or natural inspiration that was laid hold of and utilised in the higher Hebrew lyrics by the interminglings of an inspiration born from above and taught of God. Apart from this, however, it is the lyrical mood with its figurative, repetitive, and rhythmic expression, that forms the fittest vehicle for any preoccupied or all-absorbing state of mind. Hence, warm or solemn utterance has a tendency to parallelism and kindred methods. When Adam, for example, would give vent to his emotion of surprised delight, he is represented as doing it in a kind of couplet—

'Bone of my bone, Flesh of my flesh,
She shall be woman, Because taken from man[1].'

The same thing may be observed in the sevenfold lines of God's address to Cain[2], and in many other instances

[1] Gen. ii. 23. [2] Gen. iv. 10, 11.

of direct address, where the emotion is to be regarded as strong. We do not associate the term poetess with the name of Sarah, but if we wish an illustration of the simplest lyrical mood, we find it in her brief effusion of maternal joy and thankfulness on Isaac's birth. It is rhythmical in tone, and is introduced by a specially poetic expression :—Who would have *said*, that is, have *said in song* or *chanted* to Abraham?

'Who-would have-sung-it to-Abraham
That Sarah should-suckle children?
For-I-have-borne a-son in-his-old-age.'

Musical cadence or bodily gesture are, as we shall see, the natural and almost inevitable accompaniments of this high-strung mood, in order to emphasize and accentuate the expression.

From the simple outburst of personal impulse to the more studied and elaborate *Choral lyric*, the transition is not difficult. To lengthen out the lyrical period, to introduce and intermingle the several kinds of parallelism, and to vary the tone of the parts, is a process easily understood, and would be readily adopted. Then, by the simple device of a chorus and refrain, by balancing one set of parallelisms with another so as to make a strophe and anti-strophe, and by varying the combinations, the whole system of antiphonal, responsive, or part singing under a leader like Miriam would be developed, for the effective rendering of such majestic and elaborate chants as the *Song of Moses* at the Red Sea—'the untranslatable oldest triumphant song in the world,' as Herder calls it—or Deborah's warlike strains, or other kindred odes.

In these great songs there is a symmetrical arrangement of parts, and there are divisions into longer or shorter strophes and antistrophes by a refrain or other catchwords; although, from our ignorance of Hebrew

Music, it is difficult, and often impossible to determine with certainty how these divisions and arrangements were sung. We can feel the power and pathos of the thrice-recurring refrain, 'How are the mighty fallen!' even in *reading* David's lament over Saul and Jonathan. But who can say whether or not its three sections were rendered, as some have thought, the first strophe by a single voice, the second by a body of 'daughters of Israel,' and the third by a company of youths, and the refrain by the united chorus in a tone 'not loud but deep'? Variety and effect were no doubt carefully studied, so as to meet the rapid transitions and animated turns of such a song as Deborah's, some parts of which are put in the mouth of Deborah and Barak alternately, and some are evidently meant for a chorus or choruses. But who will say by whom, or how, its subtle movements were to be rendered? or such a refrain as this, for example, was interpreted?

'Uri 'Uri Deborah
'Uri 'Uri Dabbiri shir.
Up now up now Deborah
Up now up now utter a song[1].'

[1] Poetry and Song are usually written in the Hebrew text just like prose—the punctuation and accents sufficiently indicating the metrical beat and divisions. There are, however, four songs which are by traditional usage written very exceptionally: Moses' last song, Deut. xxxii., appearing in two columns down the page, and that at the Red Sea, Deborah's, and David's in 2 Sam. xxii. in three several columns of peculiar form. This arrangement, though entirely foreign to and meaningless in our tongue, may be illustrated *to the eye* from Moses' song, thus:—

Jehovah is a man of war, Jehovah is His name

Pharaoh's	chariots and his	host
hath He cast		into the sea.
His	choicest warriors are	drowned
in the Red Sea.		The depths have
covered	them: they sank	into
the bottom as-a-stone.		Thy right hand
O-LORD,	glorified in power,	Thy
right hand, O-LORD.		dashes the enemy.

The first line, it will be observed, is written as usual: the second is divided

5. Accompaniments of Hebrew Song. The two accompaniments of Hebrew lyrics were, instrumental music and processional or dance movement. In early times and among a primitive people, it is easy to see how closely allied were the sister arts of music, and dancing, and lyrical expression. Playing on an instrument, singing an accompaniment and beating time with bodily gestures, are all born of the same impulse. According to a law of sympathetic unisons, every mood of mind has a certain tone of voice corresponding to it. Joy has one class of notes, sorrow another; the expression of hope can never be mistaken for that of fear, nor awe be confounded with levity in its tone. The shriek of pain is distinguished in a moment from the shout of laughter, for each is sufficiently self-interpreting, like a minor or major key in musical expression. In like manner also, mental moods have their more or less distinctive bodily gestures; a gesture of threatening anger being very different from one of hearty welcome. Bodily motions and mental emotions have all their special affinities. And among a people little accustomed to repress or conceal their inward mood, these affinities are the more marked and noticeable.

Accompaniment of Musical Instruments. Of musical expression among the Hebrews we have no detailed information. As to the nature of the music, it was doubtless, like all in early times, *melody* alone, with nothing of what we now call harmony or the regulated chording of the four parts—treble, alto, tenor and bass. Of these they had no knowledge; but all, old and young,

into three sections, consisting of a single word, with blank space for nine letters, then three or four (seldom five) words with similar blank, and then a single word as at the beginning. The third and all the rest of the odd lines begin and end with three or four words and an equal blank between. These two classes of lines go on alternately.

male and female, boys and girls, men and women, sang simply in unison, variety being secured by a repetition of the melody in higher or lower tone, according to the pitch of the different class of voice. Hence male and female voices, deep bass and shrill soprano, often took their turn alternately,

> 'In notes with many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out.'

Monotony was further avoided and depth of expression secured by the emphasis of instrumental playing, with an adaptation of particular instruments to particular purposes. This art of expression, poor at best though it was, grew of course with the growth of taste and with the increasing number and dexterous use of the instruments. Forms of all the three classes of these, *percussion or clanging*, *stringed*, and *wind* instruments, were known from the earliest times, though no doubt at first in very rude and primitive fashion. Jubal is 'the father of all who handle the *kinnor* and *ugab*,' that is, *harp* and *pipe*, the two most general names for *stringed* and *wind* instruments respectively; as if to indicate that the third kind, *clanging* instruments, needed no invention whatever, the art of producing sounds by beating or shaking resonant things coming naturally to even a child. This for long was the first and favourite class of instrument, an early form of it, the *toph*, tabor, timbrel, tabret or tambourine, being well known in Laban's household [1], and notably used by Miriam [2], and Jephthah's daughter [3].

There are ten instruments of song named in the Historical Books—two of the stringed order, the great and little harp (the latter a hand-harp or lyre); four wind

[1] Gen. xxxi. 27. [2] Exod. xv. 20. [3] Judges xi. 34.

instruments, the pipe, horn, trumpet, and pan-pipes or lip-organ; and four for striking or shaking together, the timbrel, cymbal, rattle and triangle—these, with their modifications, being the chief musical instruments of the Jewish people.

Bodily accompaniment in processional or dance gesture. If music appealed to the ear, dance movement made a no less effective appeal to the eye. What is dance in its original idea and intent but rhythmical gesture? It is the poetry of motion: standing related to ordinary bodily movement as musical utterance stands to ordinary speech. Musical rhythm *articulates*, dance rhythm *gesticulates* the high-strung lyrical mood. The swaying motion of a singer, the natural disposition to beat time with head, hand, or foot, and the use of a conductor's baton in an orchestra, are all modifications of the same rhythmic movement as the primitive dance impulse [1]. We find the more of this, the further back we go; and the more demonstrative a people or the less habituated to control their moods, the more readily they resort to dance-accompaniments:—

> 'Till lively gesture each fond care reveals
> That music can express or passion feels.'

[1] Our very word *ballad* comes to us from the Medieval Latinism *ballare*, to dance, and the old French form *baller* (signifying the same thing) is a reminiscence of the native disposition to accompany a lyric or gleeful song with rhythmic movement, and gives us our word *ball* for the name of a dancing party. This was the usage in Spain and Southern Europe in the thirteenth century, and is maintained to this day with primitive simplicity in the Faroe Islands. Our own early chroniclers furnish abundant illustrations of Ballads being dance or gesture songs. Thus, Bishop Gawin Douglas says:

> 'Sic as we clepe wenches and damsels
> In gersy greens, wandering by spring-wells
> Of bloomed branches and flowers white and red,
> Plettand their lusty chaplets for their head,
> Some sang *ring-sangs, dances ledes and rounds*.'

Ambulatory and processional movements are adaptations of this habit—companies of singers and players breaking into sets or bands, advancing to or receding from each other, and then forming again into a united body. The words on such occasions were for the most part extempore outbursts, as when Jephthah's daughter and her companions came forth to hail her father with music and dance, or, as 'when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with timbrels, with joy, and with instruments of music: and the women sang to one another in their playing and said,

'Saul hath slain his thousands
And David his ten thousands.'

A more sedate form of the processional and dance movement could be easily adapted to sacred and religious emotions, as when David danced before the ark in token of devout joy and thankfulness.

6. Spirit and Purpose of Hebrew Song. With the exception of some secular fragments still extant, the Hebrew lyrics, both earlier and later, are of an intensely religious character. They are emphatically 'spiritual songs.' Even the battle lyrics are highly devotional, glowing with all the ardour of pious thought and feeling. To give expression to this state of mind and to foster it, is the avowed object of many of these sacred odes. Religious conviction is supreme. They are veritable *God-songs—of* God, *to* God, *for* God. This is their key-note and their substance. In other ancient literatures, the hymns to the gods are rather *de*scriptive than *as*criptive: but the Hebrew lyrics are intended to thrill the soul with sentiments of adoration. In other languages, the sacred lyrics are sparks from the anvil of

genius; the Hebrew lyrics are live coals from the altar of devotion.

Secular Songs of the Hebrews. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the Israelitish people were destitute of the ordinary or secular songs of everyday life. There is abundant evidence to the contrary. Indeed, it would be difficult for us to conceive of a people so lyrical as Israel being without such lays of domestic or common life; ditties that women might sing when grinding at the mill or drawing water at the well; snatches of verse of a stronger type for men to cheer their toil, answering to the plash of the oars or the drawing of the fishermen's nets, the tread of the sower or the march of the soldier; songs of harvest and vintage; of the bridal and banquet, and other social or festive seasons. So early as the days of Laban we read of him remonstrating thus with Jacob, 'Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp[1]?' Allusions are not infrequent in the Prophets to harvest, vintage, and other gleeful songs, as in Isaiah xvi. 10, 'In the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joyful noise'; or to hymeneal songs, as in Psalm lxxviii. 63, 'Their maidens were not praised in marriage' (*Revised Version*, 'Their maidens had no marriage song'). We have indications of melodies in which prosperous worldliness sets forth even its profane mirth and jollity[2], while the reference in Psalm lxix. 12, 'I was the song of the drunkards,' seems not obscurely to hint at Bacchanalian or other wild dithyrambic strains. According to the general voice of critics, the titles or headings of some of the Psalms preserve the memory of many secular lyrics. The inscription, for example, of Psalm xxii.

[1] Gen. xxxi. 27. [2] See Job xxi. 11 and 12, and Isaiah xxiv. 8, 9.

'Hind of the dawn,' is understood to mean, *according to the song beginning 'Hind of the dawn'*; or of Psalm lvi. 'The silent dove from afar,' which perhaps should rather be rendered 'the dove of the far-off terebinth trees'; or the mystic word 'Altaschith,' placed over Psalms lvii. lviii. lix. and lxxv., which means 'Destroy it not'; or 'Shoshannim,' *lilies*, in Psalms xlv. lxix. and lxxx. and the like. The idea is that as the Psalms of the synagogue, the *Peyútim*, are confessedly set to tunes of old secular melodies, or as in Reformation times 'Godlie ballads' for public worship were adapted to the airs of popular or favourite songs (the origin also, it would seem, of some early church music), these headings may be directions to the particular song after whose melody the Psalm is adapted to be sung. Be this, however, as it may, there are ample evidences otherwise of a great body of Hebrew secular songs. How these have not come down to us is nothing wonderful. They were alien to the purpose of Holy Writ, and it would have been remarkable had they survived the wreckage of the Captivity, in which such masses of earlier literature got scattered and destroyed[1].

Spirit of Hebrew Sacred Song. With the exceptions

[1] Of Solomon we read in 1 Kings iv. 32 'his songs were a thousand and five,' which he had either written or gathered, and these have disappeared in the abyss of time. And not these alone by any means. At least fifteen books which are referred to in early Canonical Scripture have been lost: some of them lyrical, at least poetical, as for instance the collection of elegiac or threnic dirges called in 2 Chron. xxxv. 25 the '*Kïnoth*' or Laments, quite a different book from the '*Ëcha*' or canonical 'Lamentations' of Jeremiah. The much-debated Book of Jasher (i. e the *Upright*), whatever else it was, had at least a body of lyrical contents, as the only two extracts from it suffice to show—David's Lament for Jonathan, and the words of *Joshua* x. 12, 13,

'Sun, stand-thou-still upon-Gibeon
and-thou-moon, in-the-valley of-Aijalon
And-the-sun stood-still and-the-moon-did-stay
Till-the-nation was-avenged of-their-enemies.'

just indicated, Hebrew historic song, as we know it, is nothing if not sacred. And for devotional intensity the earliest of these lyrics is on a level with the latest. Religion is their chosen sphere, and in this high vocation they have no competitors. In them

> 'Devotion borrows music's tone,
> And music takes devotion's wing.'

Whatever contrasts they present—and they are many—and whatever their varying depths of light and shade, one all-pervading spirit animates them and fuses them into a living unity. These songs, of Moses and Deborah, of Hannah and David, however diverse their note and tone, agree in flashing back upon us the sense of a personal, present and living God. And they express every mood of pious emotion, and are set to every thrill of the devout nature, whether it be reverence, thanks, hope, penitence, faithfulness, submission, or obedience. Here we have Moses subduing the people to awe; there, we have David raising them to ecstasy. Here, Deborah spreads her wings on the blast and shrieks fierce defiance to the godless foe; there, Hannah rebukes the insolence of impious pride and glorifies the honour of tender-hearted humility. For was it not their function, as Milton expresses it, 'to celebrate the throne and equipage of God's almightiness: to sing victorious agonies of martyrs, saints, and heroes, their deeds and triumphs, doing valiantly; to deplore the general relapses of the states and kingdoms from righteousness and God's true worship; to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of public virtue and civility; and whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in goodness amiable and grave, all these things with a solid and tractable smoothness to paint out and describe?'

These songs were potent factors and influences in

training Israel to higher and nobler ideals, embodying in popular and impressive form the purer and more enduring phases of their revelation. They contain glimpses of those far-reaching elements in the Hebrew faith which gradually triumphed over what was inferior and transient, and enabled the people to slough off those tendencies they had in common with the gross and idolatrous peoples around them. They were preparatory to the Psalms and Prophets, whose function it was to unfold and display the more universal and abiding conceptions, which moulded the Old Testament Church and which were to attain their 'bright consummate flower' in the Gospel of God's own Son. Why more of them were not placed among the Psalms may be variously accounted for. Being hymns for specific occasions, rather than for indiscriminate use in worship, they are naturally imbedded in the historic text, to illumine and enliven the narrative in connection with the events which gave them birth. Nor is it difficult for us *now* to believe that Moses should be the father of Hebrew song, as well as of Hebrew law and history; the Homer no less than the Herodotus and Solon of his people[1]. That some difficult

[1] The question of the age and authorship of some of the songs is not without its difficulties. Thus in regard to the Song of Moses in Exodus xv. three views have been entertained—the common traditional view that it really dates from the Exodus: the negative critical one that it is of much later date: and the intermediate one that the refrain and some snatches here and there are the original, but that it has been worked at, added to, and edited in its present state at a subsequent period. Much of this dubiety arose from a mistaken notion that the art of authorship could not have obtained so early among the Hebrews as the Pentateuchal writings seem to represent. Now, however, such a surmise falls to the ground by the discovery of records and papyri in Egypt revealing an advanced state of literature far more ancient than was once supposed. The Papyrus D'Orbiney, for example, which has been published in fac-simile by the British Museum Trustees, is as old as the Exodus, and contains a story earlier than Abraham. A famous 'Hymn to the Nile' is twice the length of the Song of Moses, and is known to be at least as ancient; while another poem on a temple

and peculiar words in the songs of Moses should have proved to be of Egyptian origin seems to strengthen the otherwise natural conviction that the era and events of the Exodus must have been propitious for music and song.

And what thus originated with Moses culminated with David. In him the development of sacred lyric attained its height. 'With his whole heart he sung songs; and loved Him that made him [1],' says an Apocryphal writer. He is 'the darling of the songs of his people.' He is 'the sweet singer of Israel.' It is David to whom Dante refers, when he speaks of

> 'Him who sang
> The Songs of the Supreme; himself supreme
> Among his tuneful brethren.'

In the martial ode of Deborah, the war-spirit is at its height; but the tendency to mere battle-songs and other fierce strains during the wild times of the Judges was happily checked by Samuel and his school of the prophets [2]. Sacred minstrelsy was in larger measure resumed, and the national temper got chastened and softened. Then David adopted the lyric strain, and made of the devotional lyric a royal plant, with richest blossoms and clustering fruits.

There are two great characteristics of these older songs; two features they have in common with the Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs—the spirit of *piety* and of *prophecy*. They are outpourings of *personal*

wall is two centuries earlier still. But yet more ancient—and perhaps the most ancient sacred song in the world—a hymn to the Sun, prior to Abraham's time, is to be found in 'The Hall of the Two Truths,' or the 125th chapter of the oldest of all Egyptian books, *The Ritual of the Dead*. These hymns resemble Hebrew poetry in structure, though stiffer and more artificial in their movement.

[1] Ecclesiasticus xlvii. 8.

[2] 1 Sam. x. 5.

godliness on the one hand, and of *prophetic aspiration* on the other.

They are first of all supremely GOD-SONGS, as we have already called them. 'To the LORD' is the real inscription on each. The Lord Jehovah is their burden and theme; and His exaltation is their highest aim. 'I will sing unto the LORD,' is the key-note of Moses' first song; and 'I will proclaim the name of the LORD,' is that of his last. 'I, even I, will sing unto the LORD,' says Deborah; and 'My heart exulteth in the LORD' is the opening word with Hannah. So, too, 'David spake unto the LORD' his song of deliverance. A present God; a felt presence; above all, a joyous saving presence whom I can approach with singing, and to whom I can address my song direct, and make it as an offering to Him—are not these the ruling and animating convictions which attach to such a form of expression? To realise that God may be approached with singing; that He is not unwilling to receive such an oblation; that He rejoices in such expressions, and does not grudge the ebullition of such moods of joy in His presence;—is not this one of the great purifying and elevating principles in the Mosaic economy, and a seed of better things yet to come? Was it not prophetic of the time when the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving should supplant all bloody rites and flaming holocausts by virtue of one sacrifice for sin offered once for all? It was a spirit of improvement lodged in the ceremonial system, which should burst at last its ancient cerements.

And this brooding sense of the joyfulness of the Divine presence, with what an elevating glow it invests these songs! Hence ever and anon they rise into direct impassioned address. They may start with didactic statements, speaking of God in the third person, but soon

they burst away into devout ascription, as in the sixth verse of Moses' first song, 'Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power: Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy;' while his last one is so full of such forms of address, that it reads in great part like a dialogue between himself and God. How remarkable are these old songs for the consciousness and revelation of the ever-living and ever-present great 'I AM,' and for the spirit of personal passionate attachment they breathe! How they tear aside the veil of mere phenomenalism, and sing of Him who sits above and behind the machinery of things, and whose hand they see put forth upon the springs of Nature, originating, controlling, and giving efficiency to all! On what familiar yet majestic figures of speech they venture! A hurricane is 'the blast of the breath of His nostrils;' the lightning-flashes are His arrows; the thunder is His voice in the heavens; He Himself is 'a man of war,' and He draws 'His glittering sword.' How august the form enclosed within the folds of such poetic drapery[1]! God is conveyed in parables that partly reveal and partly conceal Him, as men are able to bear or interpret the revelation. They are like some venerable words which have grown obsolete in one sense, yet have acquired another meaning more suitable and adequate. And so these glorious metaphors live on

[1] Some profess to be offended with such ways of representing God, forgetting that the only method of conveying new or impressive ideas is just by this process of *analogy*, or the comparison of things in their *inner relations*, not in mere *outer resemblance*. When we speak of the *foot* of a hill, for example, who dreams of heel or toes? All instinctively feel that what is meant is a resemblance not in the things but in their relations; and all expressive words are grounded on analogy. The foot of a hill is to the hill what our foot is to our body. The resemblance stops there, and no one is misled. Human representations of God have been thought to be derogatory to Him. But after all, human personality is the highest ground of analogical ideals; so that the process, far from degrading God, has always tended to lift up man. To escape from these analogies, based on personality, would be to escape into the region of nonentities and dreamland.

and on, because they wear the 'colours dipped in heaven, that never die.'

Another characteristic feature, common to all these sacred songs, is their *prophetic* and therefore perennially quickening power. The whole history and institutions of Israel are of this prophetic cast. And such herald songs are like the half-conscious stirrings within the chrysalis—the *avant courier* of prophetic hope, in both of its aspects, *in*sight and *fore*sight. The prophetic spirit acts as insight, intuitive insight in *moral and spiritual* principles, as science is insight and inquiry into *natural* law. A common incident, the fall of an apple, arrests the attention of Newton, and leads him to the universal force of gravitation. A common incident, the birth of a child, leads Hannah in her song first to name the Lord 'Messiah [1],' and to seize the universal power and prevalence of humbleness of mind throughout the kingdom and economy of God's salvation.

Or, again, to Moses in his first song, the overthrow of Pharaoh is like a stone cast into the water, which creates an eddy of circles with ever-widening development, till at last the announcement comes, 'The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.' Yes, the Lord shall reign; not Israel. For there is nothing boastful or merely national in these triumphant notes. They rise high above mere patriotic vainglory. 'Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people,' is the world-wide destiny desired at last, in the close of Moses' final Deuteronomic song [2].

And David, in his 'last words' of life's evensong, takes occasion, from a review of his own government, to yearn and cry out for an ideal king and kingdom, sure to come eventually among man, and be—

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 10. 'His anointed' is literally 'His Messiah.'
[2] Deut. xxxii. 43.

'As the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth,
A morning without clouds;
As when the tender grass springeth out of the earth,
Through clear shining after rain[1].'

For all these songs, however intensely Hebrew, are yet more intensely human. Hebrew in their form and dress, yet in their body, soul, and spirit they belong to humanity. 'Their line goes out through all the earth: their words to the world's end.' It is this endless power of stimulus these songs contain, that gives them their undying and universal mission, Their horizon widens as the ages roll; and they become like a rainbow of hope and mercy, with ever-opening archway across the heaven of human outlook.

'They live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In deeds of daring rectitude: in scorn
For miserable aims to end with self:
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence, urge man's search
To vaster issues.'

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii.

THE SONG OF MOSES AT THE RED SEA.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

Exodus xv. 1–18.

1 I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
2 The LORD is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation:
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.
3 The LORD is a man of war:
The LORD is His name.
4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea:
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
5 The deeps cover them:
They went down into the depths like a stone.
6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power,
Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
7 And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou overthrowest them that rise up against Thee:
Thou sendeth forth Thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble.
8 And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up,
The floods stood upright as an heap;
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.
9 The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil:
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
10 Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
11 Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
12 Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
13 Thou in Thy mercy hast led the people which Thou hast redeemed:
Thou hast guided them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation.
14 The peoples have heard, they tremble:
Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.

15 Then were the dukes of Edom amazed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them:
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
16 Terror and dread falleth upon them;
By the greatness of Thine arm they are as still as a stone;
Till Thy people pass over, O LORD,
Till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased.
17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance,
The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in,
The sanctuary, O LORD, which Thy hands have established.
18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

UNWONTED interest attaches to this song—the earliest on record of all the sacred odes, and the very foremost in the annals of Hebrew anthology. To the Jewish people themselves, it is what they have long called it, 'THE SONG'; a designation to which it is entitled, alike from its inherent pre-eminence and its unrivalled associations.

It is Israel's *natal* song. For in crossing the Red Sea, they passed through the birth-throes of their national existence, and from this epoch dates a new chronology in Israel's calendar. The oppressed tribes have become a commonwealth; and a commonwealth of the free.

It is Israel's *emancipation* song, or song of *liberty*. It signalises a triple deliverance; marking the supreme moment of rescue from the threefold evils of domestic slavery, political bondage, and religious thraldom. What a transition, even geographically! A single night's march had swept them from one continent into another, and left a 'silver streak of sea' between. In the evening they were an African population; the morning found them on their ancestral Asian soil. When the people reached that further shore, they bounded into freedom; and this is the glad sound of their release, the antici-

pation of all jubilee songs of liberty. It could not but be the happy era of song; and so we read of it in Hosea[1], 'She shall sing, as in the days of her youth; even as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.'

It is Israel's *first National Anthem and Te Deum* in one. The Exodus was not a mere effort on the part of the Hebrew race to achieve their independence and realize their aspirations after a separate nationality. The spirit of even this idea had yet to be created within them; but everything depended on their being first delivered from the corrupting influences of Egyptian fetichism and idolatry, no less than from the yoke of Egyptian bondage. Not that the mass of them could at all appreciate the full meaning of the grand event as a mighty religious movement, repeating on a larger scale the migration of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and breaking away from idolatrous and debasing superstitions, to find a home for the free development of a higher creed and worship. But the eye of their great leader descried this divine purpose; and he had gone with this first tentative proposal to Pharaoh from God, 'Let My people go, that they may *serve Me* in the wilderness.' For the grinding tyranny under which the tribes were groaning extended to their religion, which was likely to be crushed out entirely, as the fatal fetters of heathen usage tightened around them. One effective stroke could alone free them for ever from the snares of polytheism—from the unclean, yet fascinating worship of animals, the bull Apis, the goat of Mendes, the calf of Memphis, the crocodile of Ombos, and whatever else of forms human, bestial, or symbolic the great temples held in their dark recesses[2].

[1] Hosea ii. 15.

[2] Lucian, the Greek satirist, says, 'If you go to Egypt, you will find

It is Israel's *Te Deum*, or song of thanks and praise to God. An overwhelming sense of the divine interposition is the predominant sentiment in the song from first to last. It is no mere secular ode; no mere war-song or outburst of patriotic triumph; no exultant shriek of insult over a fallen foe; but an anthem of blessing and gratitude for a great deliverance, a devout and solemn Psalm before God, to whom, of whom, and for whom it is sung. This high and sacred intent keeps it from degenerating into a wild strain of vindictiveness or vainglory. The Lord alone is exalted, not a word being uttered to the glory of the people or their great leader. Hence the descriptive element is everywhere subordinated to the devotional and adoring. It is a hymn for spiritual worship.

It is Israel's *Church-song*; the type of all songs of redemption and salvation. The very words 'redemption' and 'salvation' are first introduced in connection with this great deliverance. 'I will *redeem* you with an outstretched arm[1];' and again, 'Fear ye not; stand still, and see *the salvation* of the LORD[2].' The people had become unified into a worshipping assembly. The nation has become a Church; the Theocracy has begun.

It is Israel's *triumph-song* of deliverance. The note is that of joy and victory; and is prophetic of the success of every battle and struggle for the Lord's cause and kingdom, fought in the Lord's name and in His strength. This triumph is the precursor especially of that final and glorious one at the end of the ages, when the spiritual Israel, which no man can number, from every people,

Jupiter with the face of a ram, Mercury as a dog, Pan a goat. The ibis is a god, so is the crocodile, so is the ape. Shaven priests tell us that the gods in panic terror assumed these shapes, when the giants rebelled.'

[1] Exod. vi. 6. [2] Exod. xiv. 13.

and tribe and language, 'having gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name,' shall take up a position like their prototypes of old—not, however, by the shore of the Red Sea, with the mere emblem of God's presence before them—but as John saw them in apocalyptic vision, standing by the sea of glass mingled with fire; no longer led merely by Miriam and her chorus, but all of them having the harp of God in their hand, singing, not only 'the Song of Moses, the servant of God,' but 'the Song of the Lamb,' saying,—

'Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages.
Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy.
For all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest[1].'

There are different methods of dividing the song, as it is borne forward in wave after wave, until it breaks with its mightiest billow at last, 'The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.' For musical rendering, some parts would require to be dealt with as recitative, and some as choral or responsive; some in a declarative or descriptive tone; and others in a tone devoutly ascriptive. For our present purpose of edification we shall consider it in three divisions:—

PART I. Introduction: or the triple aim of the song, ver. 1, 2.

PART II. The body, or subject-matter of the song, ver. 3–13.

PART III. Conclusion: with its threefold issues, ver. 14–18.

[1] Rev. xv. 2–4.

PART I.

Introduction: or the Triple Aim of the Song.

1 'I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
2 The Lord is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation:
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.'

Thus the song is, first of all, inscribed and offered to the Lord. He also is its great theme or subject; and it is His exaltation that constitutes its one and expressly avowed aim. *To* God, *of* God, *for* God—these are the three pivot-thoughts regulating and determining the movement of the opening strophe, and, indeed, of the entire hymn. Here, as not infrequently with later psalms, we have the whole song concentrated in the first verse. The occasion of the song, its subject, its design, are all indicated.

'I will sing unto Jahve (Jehovah), for He is lifted on high, on high,
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.'

By this sudden dashing into the very heart of the subject, and by the repetition of 'on high, on high,' we are made to feel how deeply the singer has been stirred by those august scenes of which he has been an eye-witness, and how, in common with the seething, surging mass of a redeemed people, he has been thrilled with the intensely solemn event of the hour.

First, there is here a singing *to* the Lord. The simplest idea we can attach to the opening words, 'I will sing to the Lord,' is this—I will bring myself into the immediate and felt presence of Jehovah, and will address

and offer my song to Him! How near has He been to us during the eventful and stupendous transactions of the night! Under a realising sense of that nearness I will direct my song to Him. To what a pitch of solemnity this conception raises the singer! God Himself is his auditor: and this consciousness of being before God broods over his thoughts, and invests the song with a sacred glow. Hence, after a brief interval, it rises into a strain of the most direct and impassioned personal address:—

'Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power;
Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.'

And this direct style of approach and address to God is continually recurring throughout the hymn.

But while this idea of singing to the Lord is expressive of the singer's attitude as immediately before the very face of the Supreme, it no less indicates that the song is an acceptable offering and oblation to the Lord. It is no self-pleasing exercise of gift and faculty, but 'a sacrifice to the Lord, the fruit of the lips.' That God may be approached with singing; that it pleases Him 'to dwell amid the praises of Israel'; that He delights in such expressions of creaturely delights in Himself; that He does not grudge us these happy ebullitions of grateful admiration and reverence,—what an ideal of pure and spiritual worship this suggests! This was one of the felicities of the Israelitish creed and worship.

'I will sing unto the LORD,
For He is gloriously glorified.'

'Singing,' says one, 'is as much the language of holy joy as prayer is the language of holy desire.' How sublime a sight! The whole of a people singing before the one invisible God, and consciously realising more or

less their direct relation to the Eternal, under no outward form or image or material symbol! Heathenism doubtless has its hymns to the gods; but these are descriptive presentations, more of the nature of bribes for favours to come than outbursts of grateful acknowledgment for services already rendered; more for the purpose of deprecating their wrath than expressive of their honour; more with the view of making other gods envious, and constraining their assistance thereby, than free and joyous effusions of admiring, reverential, and consecrative praise. But this great offering of song unto the LORD is one of those elevating and purifying principles of worship in the Mosaic economy ensuring the removal of grosser elements; prophetic and preparatory of a purely spiritual system apart from bloody rites and blazing holocausts; and laden with the gracious summons and directory, 'Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands: serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.' For, secondly, we have here a singing *of* the LORD. The song is both *about* the LORD and *from* Him.

> 'My strength and song is Jah,
> And He has become to me for salvation.'

The word for song here is a peculiar one. It is a poetic and primitive word, different from the one already used for singing. It means the subject or theme of my song. What is the force of the stanza but this?—the LORD is both the inspiration and the matter of my song: He it is that gives vigour and meaning and animation to it, as being both the source and the theme of it, especially considering how He has Himself become our very salvation.

Secondly, the LORD is the *subject or theme* of the song. Underlying all is the sense of the divine personality.

Nothing but this could have kindled the soul to song. If God is to be the subject of hymning praise, it must needs be the thought of a living, personal one, to evoke the spirit of glorying in and praising His name. That God is to be the theme is made singularly evident, inasmuch as no fewer than four names of God, embracing two classes, with a long and short form of each [1], are pressed into use in the opening lines—a very suggestive and significant indication of the importance of the theme. The LORD is the *source and inspiration* of my song. The first clause, 'Jah is *my strength*,' some would prefer to render 'Jah is *my praise*,' and others prefer an intermediate sense, 'Jah is my *glory*.' All these three senses are intimately related. For whatever we regard as our strength or might, we readily make a matter of boast or *glory*, and the transition is easy from glory to praise. For glorifying is the inward mental process of which praising is simply the outward or verbal expression. Thus, 'Jah is my strength,' is meant to set Him

[1] The following will present these names and their order to the reader:—

'I will sing unto *Jehovah* (*Jahveh*), for He is lifted on high, on high;
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
Jah is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation.
This is my *El*, and I will praise Him;
The *Elohim* of my father, and I will exalt Him.'

Names, especially divine names, were inconceivably more important to the Jewish mind than to us. They were more immediate realities with them.

Jehovah (now more commonly and correctly written *Jahveh*, of which *Jah* is the contraction) was the *proper* name: 'the sacred and covenant name, the tetra-grammaton or shem-hamphorash, too sacred to be pronounced, and the grand bulwark against idolatry and the idea of local deities or of dynasties of gods. It means the self-existent, the Eternal I AM: the incommunicable perfection of the divine essence. This name was the abbreviated creed or symbol of all revealed religion; and round it the warmest thoughts and the tenderest feelings of devotion gathered. El or Elohim, on the other hand, is the generic or common name for God or gods—pointing to a certain internal variety or manifoldness. It means the strong one, the supreme; either the supreme object of worship or the supreme ruler, or both.'

forth as the spring and source of my song as well as its theme, the ground of my glorying and the uplifter and sustainer of my praise. And truly, unless He be the strength of our heart, how can we make our glory and boast of Him? and if He be not our glory and boast, how can we make Him sincerely our praise? Finally, the LORD is the strength of my song, *because He is become my salvation*. For it is salvation that kindles song, and not merely the salvation which the Lord has wrought and brought, but the salvation which He in Himself *is*. What importance belongs to this sentiment may be judged from the quoting of this line twice over in Psalm and Prophecy [1], and the application of it in both cases to the spiritual salvation which finds in God both its source and its ultimate issue. A man saved from perdition, a man rescued from the pursuing foe, a man with his feet safe again on the solid shore, with a new-born sense of release and the air of a freshly acquired freedom breathing around him—that is the man to sing a song, to lift up to God the voice of praise, with the Lord and His doings, for the alone subject of his strains.

Thirdly, there is here a singing, not only *to* the LORD and *of* the LORD, but *for* the LORD.

> 'This is my God, and I will praise Him;
> My father's God, and I will exalt Him.'

To extol and exalt the LORD is thus declared to be the ultimate end and aim of this song. And indeed this is the highest reach and the final purpose of all praise—to manifest and express the divine character, the divine working and ways, the divine glory and honour. We are taught to pray *for* God as well as *to* Him; and to put this ever in the foreground of our prayers, as of all

[1] Psalm cxviii. 14, and Isaiah xii. 2.

things the first, the best, the supremely desirable. 'Hallowed by *Thy* name: *Thy* kingdom come: *Thy* will be done'—these petitions have the precedence over any for either ourselves or others. But not only to do this, but also to express it and set forth our purpose to do it—this is the special aim and function of praise, of which 'Doxology,' or the ascription of power, blessing, dominion, and every excellency, is the highest climax. In every other exercise of worship we have some regard to our own edification, our own wants, our own necessities. But 'whoso offereth praise,' it is said, 'glorifieth Me,' for then God alone fills the whole horizon of vision: nothing else and no one else comes into the field of view: the whole being is caught up into a rapture of delight, and filled and absorbed with a self-forgetting spirit. The singer is borne away out of any self-seeking, or any desire to glorify his people. He is lost in wonder, love, and praise of God alone. To exalt the LORD; to set His doings in their true light; to vindicate the honour of His name; to seize the opportunity of paying due homage to God Himself and to make Him better known and understood, more fully trusted, obeyed, and gloried in—this is the sublime *motif* of the song. All else is forgotten or pushed aside. No mention here of the dignity and calm grandeur of the great leader of Israel in this emergency, and no reference to popular enthusiasm or heroic action of any of their chiefs! There is no apostrophe to winds and waves, and no heathenish address to them. The singer gets behind all forces and instrumentalities; and if he sing of mercies and triumph, it is in no base, sordid, or self-seeking spirit. For,

> 'This is my God, and I will praise *Him*:
> My father's God, and I will exalt *Him*.'

There is no higher attitude than this for the human

spirit: where God alone is the all-sufficing object of delight. It is the very anticipation of heaven itself and of all its worship.

PART II.

THE BODY, OR SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE SONG.

Choral.

3 The LORD is a man of war:
The LORD is His name.

Recitative.

4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea:
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
5 The deeps cover them:
They went down into the depths like a stone.

Ascriptive.

6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power:
Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
7 And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou overthrowest them that rise up against Thee:
Thou sendest forth Thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble.
8 And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up,
The floods stood upright as an heap;
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

Recitative.

9 The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil:
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Ascriptive.

10 Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
11 Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
12 Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
13 Thou in Thy mercy hast led the people which Thou hast redeemed:
Thou hast guided them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation.

The third verse seems to be designed for a great chorus—probably meant to be re-echoed by a body of deep-voiced warriors. It marks a transition from the declarative style of the introduction. to the alternation of recitative and ascriptive portions in the main body of the song. It forms also a suitable link between the two, being a fit climax to what precedes, because it sets forth why and in what character the Lord is to be exalted—'the Lord is a man of war'—and a fit index to what follows, because it suggests, so strikingly, the nature of His triumph which is now about to be celebrated; a triumph involving struggle and conflict. The phrase 'a man of war[1],' is both a striking Hebrew idiom and a bold and picturesque figure, enclosing in the mystic folds of its poetic drapery a living breathing reality. Such a metaphor acts like a parable in both training and testing the religious susceptibilities of men; partly revealing and partly concealing what it contains; vitalising the truth it is meant to convey, and bringing the divine action within the scope of human modes of procedure. It is a revelation not so much of what God is, as of the way He stands to us and the way we ought to be affected towards Him. We all speak in figures when we speak dramatically, impressively, and with warmth of feeling meant to move the feeling of others. And to say, 'The LORD is a man of war,' not only never diminishes real reverence, but greatly enhances it. Without

[1] We ourselves say 'a man of note,' or 'a man of weight'; but the Hebrews were peculiarly fond of this mode of expressing some eminent quality, as 'a man of words' for an eloquent man; 'a man of arm' for a strong man; 'a man of form' for a handsome man. It is often used figuratively, as here, 'a man of war,' just as when we speak of 'a heart of stone.' But what should we think, were we to say warmly, 'that man has a heart of stone,' if a mineralogically disposed being were to insist on knowing to which class of stones it belonged? Such prosaism would be resented as intolerable.

impairing the divine majesty, it brings God within the range of our interest and sympathy, and makes the knowledge of Him alive and operative; while the solemn addition 'Jehovah is His name' warns us not to carry the figure too far, and acts as a safeguard against attributing to God the acts and spirit of mere ordinary human warfare. He is 'a man of war' in accordance always with His sublime and sacred name Jehovah. The song proceeds to develop the three great qualities of the Jehovah-warrior, the Warrior who is divine. He is (1) In *Power* resistless; (2) In *Equity* unchallengeable; and (3) In *Mercy* plenteous.

He is in Power resistless. This power is seen first in the *magnitude of the scale* on which it operates — the sense of this being enhanced by the detail of particulars in verse 4. Pharaoh's chariots [1], and his host, and his chosen captains. Then, again, in the *ease* with which it effects its object as He 'casts' them into the sea—it is as if He had caught up the whole host in His hand, and slung it like a stone into the deep; and finally, in the *completeness* of the overthrow and the *irreversible and irretrievable* nature of the result.

> 'The deeps cover them:
> They went down into the depths like a stone.'

Chariot and horse and rider, in 'one dread burial blent.' It is the final and staggering stroke.

[1] There is a special religious significance here. Pharaoh is specified by name, as if a blow were now struck at Pharaoh-worship, of which, according to recent Egyptologists, Râamses was the seat, religious homage being enforced toward the reigning monarch under the title of 'The God-King.' As the first great plagues were directed against serpent-worship, Nile-worship, and other forms of idolatry, this closing catastrophe was a blow at Pharaoh-worship, the last affront to the sole worship and sovereignty of God; and so it fulfilled the outstanding threat, 'On all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment; I am Jehovah.' Exod. xii. 12.

'And none shall return to tell Egypt the story,
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride.'

Having thus signalised the catastrophe, the poet's inspiration seems to catch a new afflatus. The style suddenly changes in verses 6, 7, and 8; it ceases to be merely descriptive, and becomes directly ascriptive. The tone is now lofty and devout, God being addressed immediately in the second person, and the whole event being attributed to the interposition and miraculous operation of His power alone.

'Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power:
Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.'

He is in equity and righteousness unchallengeable. The 'equity and righteousness' is as manifest as the power. We are taught in verse 7 to regard the whole situation as intended for a display of 'the divine *excellency*': so true, so timely, and so exemplary it is in its manifestation.

With consummate ease, but with no less consummate justice, the dread penalty is enacted; to show how 'HE is glorious in holiness and fearful in praises' while 'doing wonders.' For it is intimated that Egypt, in what it was doing, was not only 'the enemy' of Israel, but it was 'of them that rose up against Thee'; fighting against the Almighty and violating the first principles of divine justice, truth, and mercy. The victims of the catastrophe were the fit subjects of a retributive and self-vindicating economy. Moreover, it was so well-timed. They were taken, as it were, red-handed, in the very act; at the very moment they were anticipating their revenge and gloating in its gratification. The enemy was saying:—

'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
My lust shall be glutted on them,
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

When — (and how sublimely the contrast is conveyed from the noise, bustle, and loud threatenings of verse 9, to the quiet but august style of verse 10)

'Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them,
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.'

A new and impressive revelation of the divine character and method of procedure was thus afforded, and an exemplary lesson read for all time coming, as to the over-ruling and holy providence of the Most High.

'Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness?'

While they were intoxicated with insolence and pride; while they were breathing out threatening and cruelty, the Lord speaks to them in wrath; the Lord holds them in derision.

'Sing! for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His chariots and horsemen, all splendid and brave,
How vain was their boasting! the LORD hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.'

Yet finally, *He is in mercy plenteous.* We have to note the goodness, no less than the severity, of God here. The reiteration in verse 12 of what has been said before, seems designedly made to enhance the sublime and suggestive contrast. 'Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand. The earth swallowed *them.* Thou in *Thy mercy* hast led the people which *Thou hast redeemed.*' It is the mercy of redemption that is celebrated, and for which the Lord is praised as a man of war. No doubt the salvation comes through destruction, and deliverance

through overthrow. But there is here no cruel gloating over the destruction, no shriek of barbarous delight and insult over the bodies of the foe. This is no end in itself, but only a means to the end. Mercy triumphs over wrath. Israel would have been dragged back to bondage had not the waters overwhelmed the Egyptians; but it is the merciful escape that is ultimately gloried in and celebrated.

'Yes! 'mid yon angry and destroying signs,
For us the rainbow of Thy mercy shines:
We hail, we bless, the covenant's bright beam,
Almighty to avenge, *Almightiest to redeem.*'

PART III.

The Threefold Issues.

Recitative.

14 The peoples have heard, they tremble:
Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 Then were the dukes of Edom amazed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them:
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
16 Terror and dread falleth upon them;

Ascriptive.

By the greatness of Thine arm they are as still as a stone;
Till Thy people pass over, O Lord,
Till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased.
17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance,
The place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in,
The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

Grand Chorus.

18 The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

In this third and last wave of the anthem, the divine mercy in the redemption of Israel is illustrated. The song becomes prophetic; and three grand issues are

described and anticipated, an immediate, an intermediate, and a final one. Like a stone cast into water, as we have already said, which creates concentric circles widening as they multiply, so this casting of Pharaoh's host into the Red Sea is destined to stir movements in the tide of things that eddy further and further as they roll. The three selected cycles of events are:—

1. The *immediate* influence of the Exodus and passage of the Red Sea, on the tribes and peoples around, verses 14–16. A striking gradation is observed in describing the various effects: there is first a widespread panic and commotion in general, then the chiefs or *phylarchs* of Edom are paralyzed with terror; the mighty men of Moab tremble with uncontrollable fear; and finally the Canaanites melt away in despair.

2. There is an *intermediate* or remoter influence on the ultimate settlement and final destiny of Israel. So great an initial triumph was a happy augury and a sure prognostication of coming success. It was to be accepted as a divine pledge of all needful aid and succour, until at length they should be firmly established in the promised land, as a nation, a race or family, and a Church. For in verse 17 we have a climax with three particulars, in which Israel is presented in three aspects, and their land is set forth in the triple character of an *inheritance*, a *home*, and a *sanctuary*, awakening the chords of *patriotism*, *ancestry*, and *worship*. A line is devoted to each of these, full of condensed and concentrated energy of feeling. 'Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance.' Here the *nation* is represented under the well-known figure of a vine, and of its being transplanted into a more congenial climate and soil. Then next, the heads of the tribes are represented as being united into one in a

theocracy, 'a place, O LORD, Thou hast made for Thyself to dwell in.' And finally the nation is a *Church*, with its one fixed seat of sacrifice and worship, 'the *sanctuary*, O LORD, which Thy hands have established.'

3. There is the last great issue of all, 'The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.' The prophecy of this song reaches thus onward to the end of all things; for the deliverance of Israel was not merely typical of, but actually a part and instalment of, the final redemption. And therefore, this song of Moses is not only the key-note and inspiration of the songs of the Old Testament Church, but a song of the Church in every age, celebrating as it does an event and deliverance not only pledging but vitally contributing to the last great acts in the onward triumph of Christ's complete redemption. And therefore it will ever be associated, and even mingle at length, with the 'Song of the Lamb,' because they both alike sing of the great redemption which from the beginning has been, and ever will be, the one real subject of the Church's praise. And even in heaven itself the ransomed find their highest employ in singing 'the Song of Moses the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb,' whose final note is here given for the first time, 'the LORD shall reign for ever and ever,' and it is repeated in apocalyptic vision, when 'there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and His Christ; *and He shall reign for ever and ever*[1].'

[1] Rev. xi. 15.

THE DEUTERONOMIC SONG,

OR

FAREWELL SONG OF MOSES.

'Vouchsafe to call to mind that God did make
A last and lasting'st piece—A Song. He spake
To Moses to deliver unto all
That Song: because He knew they would let fall
The Law, the Prophets, and the History,
But keep the Song still in their memory.'

DONNE, *Anatomy of the World.*

'A harmony that finding vent
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument.
A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft, as dying swan the rain,
Throwing the drops off with a strain
Of her white wings.'

BROWNING.

'A terrible sagacity informs
The prophet's heart; he looks to distant storms;
He hears the thunder, ere the tempest lowers,
And armed with strength surpassing human powers,
Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
And darts his soul into the dawning plan.'

COWPER, *Table Talk.*

THE DEUTERONOMIC SONG,

OR

FAREWELL SONG OF MOSES.

Deut. xxxii. 1–43.

1 Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth:
2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew;
As the small rain upon the tender grass,
And as the showers upon the herb:
3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
4 The Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are judgement:
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He.
5 They have dealt corruptly with Him, they are not His children, it is their blemish;
They are a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do ye thus requite the LORD,
O foolish people and unwise?
Is not He Thy Father that hath bought thee?
He hath made thee, and established thee.
7 Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations:
Ask thy father, and he will shew thee;
Thine elders, and they will tell thee.
8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
9 For the LORD's portion is His people;
Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.

10 He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness;
He compassed him about, He cared for him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye:
11 As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
That fluttereth over her young,
He spread abroad His wings, He took them,
He bare them on His pinions:
12 The LORD alone did lead him,
And there was no strange god with him.
13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
And he did eat the increase of the field;
And He made him to suck honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock;
14 Butter of kine, and milk of sheep,
With fat of lambs,
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the fat of kidneys of wheat;
And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.
15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:
Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek:
Then he forsook God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
16 They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods,
With abominations provoked they Him to anger.
17 They sacrificed unto demons, which were no God,
To gods whom they knew not,
To new gods that came up of late,
Whom your fathers dreaded not.
18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
And hast forgotten God that gave thee birth.
19 And the LORD saw it, and abhorred them,
Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.
20 And He said, I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end shall be:
For they are a very froward generation,
Children in whom is no faith.
21 They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities:

And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled in Mine anger,
And burneth unto the lowest pit,
And devoureth the earth with her increase,
And setteth on fire the foundations of the mountains.
23 I will heap mischiefs upon them;
I will spend Mine arrows upon them:
24 They shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured with burning heat
And bitter destruction;
And the teeth of beasts will I send upon them,
With the poison of crawling things of the dust.
25 Without shall the sword bereave,
And in the chambers terror;
It shall destroy both young man and virgin,
The suckling with the man of gray hairs.
26 I said, I would scatter them afar,
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:
27 Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misdeem,
Lest they should say, Our hand is exalted,
And the LORD hath not done all this.
28 For they are a nation void of counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.
29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end!
30 How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Except their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had delivered them up?
31 For their rock is not as our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves being judges.
32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah:
Their grapes are grapes of gall,
Their clusters are bitter:
33 Their wine is the poison of dragons,
And the cruel venom of asps.

34 Is not this laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up among My treasures?
35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompence,
At the time when their foot shall slide:
For the day of their calamity is at hand,
And the things that are to come upon them shall make haste.
36 For the LORD shall judge His people,
And repent Himself for His servants;
When He seeth that their power is gone,
And there is none remaining, shut up or left at large.
37 And He shall say, Where are their gods,
The rock in which they trusted;
38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise up and help you,
Let them be your protection.
39 See now that I, even I, am He,
And there is no god with Me:
I kill, and I make alive;
I have wounded, and I heal:
And there is none that can deliver out of My hand.
40 For I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say, As I live for ever,
41 If I whet My glittering sword,
And Mine hand take hold on judgement;
I will render vengeance to Mine adversaries,
And will recompense them that hate Me.
42 I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh;
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the head of the leaders of the enemy.
43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people:
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And will render vengeance to His adversaries,
And will make expiation for His land, for His people.

A MOST noticeable and outstanding feature of this great song is its series of pictures for the popular imagination, and its long array of vivid figures, to school and chasten a stiff-necked people. There is nothing here

of abstract reasoning or cold analysis. Everything is presented in concrete form as to a nation still in its spiritual childhood. This is the *educative* song of Israel. In tone it is both tender and terrifying. Its imagery, sometimes winning, sometimes startling, lends itself to warmest expostulations and appeals. How graphic and memorable are its emblems! The divine words are at the outset likened to the gentle rain and dew; God Himself is the Rock, for stability and faithfulness; His training of Israel like the eagle with its fledgelings; the people, an intractable and stubborn ox resentful of the yoke; their apostate conduct, that of a faithless wife; the divine love glowing and gleaming about them like the fire of spousal jealousy; and His indignation like an armed host—these and other figures follow in quick succession, many of them derived from Israel's wilderness experiences. For it is the poetry of the desert that dominates the song. Both language and imagery are earnest, simple, and direct, rising ever in sterner ruggedness as the song moves forward, and as the references thicken to the flaming mountain, the pillar of cloud and fire, the noxious serpents and wine like the poison of asps, the anguish of hunger and thirst, the scattered and bleaching bones, the terrible fights they had encountered, and all the other fierce struggles of their journey.

But while the imagery is derived from the past, the song itself reaches out to the future. It is in fact a prophetic outline of Jewish history, designed to lodge in the nation's heart the solemn truth that

> 'Sorrow tracketh wrong,
> As echo follows song.'

This is the primitive or moral prophecy, the type and canon of all future *prophetic* work, as Moses' first song was the type of all that was to be spiritually *poetic*.

Here, in this first germ of prophetism, we find Moses planting himself at the centre of an ever-recurring and ever-widening cycle or process of events—presenting to the people a picture of their high calling and privilege, their marvellous treatment under the divine hand, their frequent apostasy and the execution of the divine sentence in judgment and mercy; until at last he is permitted to descry the final issue and outcome of it all, both in respect to the people of Israel themselves, and the wider effects on the destiny of the world at large, in the closing strain, 'Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people.'

I. God's Words like the Dew and the Rain.

1 Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth:
2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew;
As the small rain upon the tender grass,
And as the showers upon the herb:
3 For I will proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

The opening is solemn and full of grandeur—'Give ear, ye heavens, and let the earth hear.' Isaiah makes a similar sublime commencement to his prophecies, apostrophising heaven and earth in nearly identical language. Moses had already used the same sentiment in simple didactic form when he said, 'I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse[1],' and thereby he explains the meaning of this more highly poetic style of adjuration. Such an adjuration indicates great intensity, elevation, and sincerity of feeling, while calling attention to the solemn importance of what is about to be said. It is like a herald's cry, the sound of the tocsin, or the

[1] Deut. xxx. 19.

summoning of an assize. For heaven and earth had both of them been witnesses of the covenant and giving of the law. By a sudden but suggestive transition we are introduced to the style and theme of the song. The change is from the awe-inspiring to the tenderest of moods; but it is made without derogating from the loftiness of the thought. The imagery of the gentle rain and the softly distilling dew is a fit sequel to the opening appeal to heaven and earth; and bespeaks attention to the *source*, the *quality*, and the *design* of the song. 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech distil as the dew.' None can fail to feel the charm of such a metaphor, and its winning power.

Its source. The reference to dew and rain implies first of all that the whole subject, suggestion, and origin of the song is *from above*. Its theme and inspiration alike are heavenly and divine—'As the rain and snow come down from heaven to water the earth.' We need not discuss the question, Does the dew fall? Sufficient for the present purpose that it does not originate in the plant, but distils from the quiet, calm, clear, warm heaven. 'For I am about to proclaim the name of the LORD'—it is from Him, and about Him, and on behalf of Him, I have commission to address you. Hence Jehovah is so often introduced directly speaking in the first person, as if Moses meant to say, 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.' Nothing but a voice divine will ever avail to subdue or soften human nature, come home to the conscience, subjugate the will and reign in the affections. 'Ascribe ye greatness,' therefore, that is authoritativeness, 'unto our God.'

Its quality. 'My doctrine shall *drop* as the rain, my speech shall *distil* as the dew.' The song is just the pith and substance of the Book of Deuteronomy; the

distilled quintessence of the Deuteronomic law and covenant. As Luther says, 'My best song and my best doctrine shall be the first commandment.' It is a protestation that no people or community can ever thrive, surmount their dangers and slough off their corruptions, by simply confining their attention to earthly relations and requisitions. They need a higher motive and spirit of life, as a sustaining and self-cleansing principle—in one word, a gospel of God. 'Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach thou it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel . . . And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are come upon them, that this song shall testify before them as a witness[1].'

Its design. 'As the small rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb;' gentle, yet copious and penetrative; soft, seasonable and saturating; not like a sudden but soon spent thunderstorm, nor the beating of hail that dashes where it alights; rather like small rain, the softer it falls the deeper it sinks; or like dew, the more insinuating it is, the more fertilising and lastingly effective.

> 'As dew upon the tender herb
> Diffusing fragrance round;
> As showers that usher in the spring
> And cheer the thirsty ground.'

How fine the suggestion—to connect the might and majesty of God's word with the peaceful and quietly operative, yet fertilising and fructifying, dew and rain!

The announcement of the divine name, however awe-inspiring, is alone fitted to penetrate, soften, and fertilise the heart, and make the penitent sin-sorrowing

[1] Deut. xxxi. 19–21.

soul receptive of the fruitful seed! Perhaps the whole is meant, however, rather as a prayer, or ardent yearning—Oh! that my doctrine might drop as the rain and distil as the dew;—to fertilise the hardened soil, change the bronzed face of Nature, revive the parched verdure, and fill with sap the growing shooting herbage!

II. GOD HIMSELF THE ROCK.

4 The ROCK, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are judgement:
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He.
5 They have dealt corruptly with Him (they are) not His children, (it is) their blemish;
(They are) a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do ye thus requite the LORD,
O foolish people and unwise?
Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee?
He hath made thee, and established thee.
7 Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations:
Ask thy father, and he will shew thee;
Thine elders, and they will tell thee.
8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
9 For the LORD'S portion is His people;
Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.

Seven times does this strong figure the ROCK occur in the song. The metaphor is self-explanatory; the firmness and stability of rock being a fit emblem of the divine immutability of purpose, and of God being faithful to His covenant and promises. This is the fundamental and ruling and recurring idea of the song, coming in like a refrain, and giving unity to the whole. And how deeply did this image of GOD, the ROCK, take hold

upon the mind of Israel! It passed as a familiar commonplace into their religious speech, and entered widely into the composition of their family and personal names[1]. Above all, it found its highest lodgment and its most varied application in the Psalms; in some of them, like the 18th, occurring very frequently, as if the writer loved to roll the word like a sweet morsel under his tongue.

Here, it stands in the very forefront; the first word in the construction, to mark the prominence and importance we must assign to it. For, besides its native significance of impregnable strength and security, an additional depth and fulness of meaning was imparted to the emblem from Moses' own history and experience. We cannot but think back upon the associations of the word—'Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the ROCK in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink[2];' or again in a later experience, 'And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the ROCK; and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand[3].' So the emblem of the rock acquired new and historical significance. It gradually passed upwards from an objective to a subjective or experimental application, when not only the *nature* of the rock but its varied *uses* afforded fresh and serviceable emblems. The gospel to the Old Testament Church was not merely God is a rock, firm and faithful; but He is the ROCK, with all the precious associations and all the realised practical value added to the term, whether it were employed for a hiding-place

[1] The Hebrew word is Zur: hence Eli-zur, my God a rock, Zur-iel, Pedah-zur, and many more.

[2] Exod. xvii. 6. [3] Exod. xxxiii. 21, 22.

and protection, or for shade, 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' or, most significantly of all, suggested by the smitten rock in Horeb, a source and guarantee of suitable and sufficient supply in case of dire necessity to the perishing. 'He opened the rock, and waters gushed out: they ran in the dry places like a river[1].' Hence arose the numerous and varied ideas connected with it in the different psalms and other passages in which the word rock is introduced, and hence, too, the personal and experimental avowals of which it is made the subject. 'The LORD is my rock and my deliverer.' 'Unto Thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock.' 'God is the rock of my heart.' 'My God, and the rock of my salvation.' 'O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.' It is emphatically a covenant word, and speaks the language of redemption. It is not simply God is *a* rock, immovable and strong, but He is *the* Rock; the covenant-making and covenant-keeping rock, the rock made known in historic revelation

[1] Psalm cv. 41. When the apostle in 1 Cor. x. 4 calls it 'the spiritual rock which followed them, of which they drank, and that rock was Christ,' he sufficiently cautions us against the rabbinic fancy that the rock, detached from its native precipice, went rolling after Israel in the wilderness, or the hardly less jejune misconception that the water from the smitten rock continued to flow after them in all their subsequent wanderings. What followed them he makes abundantly clear was *Christ*, of whom the smitten rock was a spiritual emblem; the great event of that rock and its water-flow abiding with them and everywhere accompanying them, as the outstanding sacramental pledge and memorial that 'when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, and they cry to Me, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.' For what may not HE be trusted in matters of deliverance, salvation, and supply of necessities, at Whose command the heavens had rained bread and the very rock yielded plenty of water? It was in this way, 'the rock in Horeb' was to the faithful among the people a 'spiritual rock,' a ground of saving faith, and the water that flowed from it was a 'spiritual drink,' a refreshing draught to their faith in God, and not a mere supply of natural wants. The rock so timeously opened was 'the rock of their salvation,' and whether they fully realised or not, to them as to us, 'that Rock was Christ'; though now the emblem is made clearer and so much more full of meaning to us.

with all the wealth of its sacred memories clustering round it. The song proceeds to develop the applicability of the word in a threefold direction, attaching it at once to God's *work*, His *ways*, and His *character*. 'The ROCK, His WORK is perfect.' The reference is not so much to the fabric of His creation as to His grand providential design or plan. It is not His handiwork, but His inner ideal, His final end and aim, that is here called up to view. No doubt His work as an artificer is perfect; each production incomparable in finish and flawless in arrangement. The tiniest atom or the slenderest leaf is a world of perfection within itself. Can any machine ever compete in perfectness with that divinely-contrived implement, the human hand? What jostling, what noise, what toilsomeness in even our best inventions and in our most successful attempts at travel compared, for example, with the silence, steadiness, and smoothness of the earth's movement in her course! And the highest speed we can produce is slowness itself in comparison! 'The Rock, His work, is perfect,' considered even as handicraft; fuller knowledge and closer examination with microscopic aids only enabling us the better to descry and appreciate the fact.

It is not, however, as artificer, but as architect we are here to regard His work as perfect. He has a plan, a providential and redemptive plan, complete in all its details; leaving no room nor need for after-thoughts, and not requiring re-consideration or amendment. In this respect 'His work is perfect'; and when fully accomplished will justify and vindicate itself. To understand the divine plan or speak of it aright we must wait till then. 'For all His WAYS are judgement'; nothing being subject to caprice or arbitrariness. Whatever outward appearances of change or adaptation to altered condi-

tions His policy may seem to assume, this is merely phenomenal or superficial in its look; the faithfulness and unity of His course abide the same. 'He knoweth the way He takes.' His is an immutability of counsel, carried into execution by the good will and purpose He hath purposed in Himself. What a contrast to the feeble, vacillating, arbitrary ways of man! But above all, He Himself, in His own CHARACTER, is the Rock: and the importance and primary significance of this is delicately conveyed and emphasized in that, while the other previous particulars have had *one line* assigned to them, this chief particular has *two* lines:—

> 'A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
> Just and right is He.'

This confidence in the divine nature itself; in Jehovah's absolute truth and equity; in His unerring rectitude and all-wise faithfulness—this is the supreme resting-place. It is also set forth here as the high well-spring of all dutiful submission, of all loyal-hearted allegiance, and of all uncorruptness in religion and piety. In it the singer finds the strongest ground for rebuke, remonstrance, and reproach to the people. For what a contrast it suggests as to *their* work, way and character!

> 'They have dealt corruptly with Him,
> They are not His children, it is their blemish;
> They are a perverse and crooked generation.'

Their work is a reeking heap of self-corruption, their way a blot, and their very nature crooked and perverse. How dismal and pitiable a description! The one redeeming feature is that they are not beyond the reach of expostulation and remonstrance. Before considering, however, the way this is administered in the next lines of the song, we must note the difficult expression—'*They*

are not His children, it is their blemish,' or in the margin, 'it is a blot upon them,' or in the Common Version, 'Their spot *is* not *the spot* of His children.' Some see here an allusion to the incised or painted marks made by idolaters in their foreheads or other parts of their persons, in token of their devotion to some special deity; the form and colour of the emblem betokening their favourite idol. Be this, however, as it may, the general sense will not be seriously affected. Such cuttings in the flesh and daubings with colour were stringently forbidden to Israel in worship; but these customs of their heathen neighbours were a temptation, too often successful with them. There were badges, however, visible and distinctive badges of their religious profession, which were allowed them and enjoined, and these were emblematic of purity and consecration. Alas! their badge was often but a blot—(the word is one of evil significance, and carries a reproach in it) their character and conduct belied alike their profession and their privileged position. The name 'God's children' was dishonoured among them, and that they were not worthily bearing it was a blot on their escutcheon and a stain on their good faith. It justly exposed them to the cutting rebuke, 'Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise?' No arrow is so sharp and barbed as a well-timed and well-directed question, winged with such precision as this. It goes straight to the conscience; and whatever else religion deals with, it must deal primarily with the conscience. The song proceeds to make appeal to the imagination, the memory, the judgment, the heart, but all with the view of getting, through them, at the conscience. Its grand purpose is to bring the LORD into contact with the people's conscience; and as there are no more effective grappling-hooks with

which to seize the conscience and moor it closely alongside of Him than a series of questions, we have them here in triple array—'Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee?' that is, hath paid for thine emancipation out of Egypt, so that you might get away scatheless and free? 'Hath not He made and established thee?' made a people and nation of thee, given thee a name and place of unprecedented distinction among surrounding tribes, established law and settled institutions in your midst, advanced you to peculiar privileges, and put you into the condition of an orderly and well-regulated Church and State? It was a fit time to recall the past, to remember their original nothingness, to take a review of what they once were, and what they had even already become. And with the promised land, the goal of all their wanderings, now almost in view, and with the bright prospects before them that were more than to realise their cherished dreams, they are asked to

> 'Remember the days of old,
> Consider the years of many generations;'

that their gratitude might be aroused and a sense of their privileges be awakened, with fresh ideas of their true calling and destiny.

> 'Ask now of history's authentic page,
> And call up evidence from every age.
> What nation will you find, whose annals prove
> So rich an interest in almighty love?
> Where will you find a race like theirs, endowed
> With all that man e'er wished or heaven bestowed?'

Our attention is specially directed to the migration, settlements, and critical junctures of other neighbouring people being largely determined, in the secret over-

rulings of divine providence, by a regard for Israel's training, and its destined work.

> 'When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
> When He separated the children of men,
> He set the bounds of the peoples
> According to the number of the children of Israel.'

The locality in which they were to be planted was a spot suited to Israel's destiny, and fitted to be, however small, yet a central pivot on which the world's history might revolve. And if the Lord chose Israel for His portion and Jacob for the *line* of His heritage, it was not because either of their number or their pre-eminence. His arrangements contemplated the small number of the people; and He provided a land suited to their population; and according, not to their merits, but to His own designs.

This is the idea imbedded in the next couplet, assigning a reason as it does for the divine procedure,—

> 'For the LORD's portion is His people;
> Jacob is the cord or lot of His inheritance.'

How frequently and solemnly is the thought inculcated, that neither the cause nor the ultimate end of the divine plan of action is in the people; it all springs from and finds its resting-place in Himself! This is the one sole adequate explanation, satisfactory alike to reason and to conscience. God has ends and designs beyond Israel. He utilises Israel for these ends, not because they were deserving, for they were an ungrateful, provoking, and stupid people; but He could make them suit His large and world-wide objects; and so could win historical heritage through them, and along the lines they represented.

III. God's training of Israel like the Eagle with her Fledgelings.

10 He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness;
He compassed him about, He cared for him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye:
11 As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
That fluttereth over her young,
He spread abroad His wings, He took them,
He bare them on His pinions:
12 The Lord alone did lead him,
And there was no strange god with him.

Two thoughts, in the two successive couplets of the tenth verse, lead up to the main figure in this passage. The first thought points to the helpless and bewildered condition of Israel, 'in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness,' when their training process began; and the second to the preciousness of Israel, not in themselves, indeed, but in view of the divine purpose which had to be accomplished through their means. How exquisite the image, 'He kept him as the apple of His eye'! or, as it may be rendered more exactly, 'the little man' or 'the pet,' 'the daughter' of the eye, alluding to the miniature portrait seen in the pupil, as well as to the tender delicacy with which the organ is protected. Possibly there may be an allusion to the special function of Israel, with 'a vision and faculty divine,' qualifying them for being in the world of religion, what Athens, the 'eye of Greece,' became, as 'mother of arts and eloquence.'

Now follows the beautiful and striking comparison—an eagle teaching her young to fly, a figure of God's nurture of a better life in His people! In her watchful care over her helpless and still tender brood, the parent bird, the mother eagle, noblest of feathered tribe, waits

with maternal solicitude for the critical time when her fledgelings may be safely roused to exert their energies in flight. By fitting signals and fluttering movements she summons them at last to the supreme attempt. When led by her instincts to conclude that their powers are sufficiently matured, she tenderly but vigorously obliges them to leave the parent nest; and if they seem inclined to linger softly in its warm bed, she breaks it about them, and urges them to make for some adjacent rocky shelf. Then she teaches them by her own fluttering how to extend and flap their wings. She watches and directs their first juvenile attempts at flight; coming to their relief when they are tired or in danger, spreading abroad her own pinions to support or guide them in these early exercises. And when at last they soar into the open reaches of heaven, she is said to sweep under them with marvellous dexterity, and sustain them in their unwonted gyrations[1]. Such is the fine comparison to illustrate the divine care and tuition of Israel and the measures God took for lifting them into a higher state.

[1] A well-known naturalist, Mr. Philip Henry Gosse, in his work on the birds of Jamaica, tells of a friend of his witnessing such a scene as Moses may have seen among the granite peaks of Horeb. 'He distinctly saw the mother bird, after the first young one had flown a little way and was beginning to flutter downward, fly beneath it and present the back and wings for its support. He could not indeed say that the young one actually rested on or even touched the parent; perhaps its confidence returned on seeing support so near, so that it managed to reach a high tree, when the other little one, invited by its parent, tried its infant wings in like manner.' And Sir Humphrey Davy, in his *Salmonia*, p. 99, thus describes what he witnessed at the Crags of Ben Wyvis, of the efforts of two eagles to teach their offspring the manœuvres of flight. 'They began by rising from the peak of the mountain in the very eye of the sun. They at first made small circles, and the young birds imitated them; they paused on their wings, waiting till they had made their first flight, and then took a second and larger whirl, always rising towards the sun and enlarging the circle of flight, so as to make a gradually extending spiral. The young ones slowly followed, apparently flying better as they mounted; and they continued this sublime kind of exercise till they were lost to our aching sight.'

'As an eagle stirreth up her nest.' The nest of Israel was Egypt, where they had been cradled into being and well-being. There they grew and multiplied. There they had found a Goshen, a rich and goodly pasture-land, where for ages they had thriven with their flocks and herds, and where like fledgelings in a kindly nest they seemed disposed to settle down, oblivious of their calling and destiny. God then began to break down their nest around them. He raised up a tyrannical dynasty, and a king that 'knew not Joseph,' who made the people's life bitter with hard and cruel bondage; and their warm, comfortable, nesting-time was over and gone. Stirred from their lethargy by the crumbling and dismantling of their Goshen home, they were prepared and then summoned by the divine flutterings over them; making them yearn after a higher vocation, and willing to be drawn away from their unsuitable abode. 'So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.' They heard and answered the divine summons, though only flutteringly and unsteadily. Here we see the explanation of that strange and roundabout chapter of Israel's history; the dislodging and disquieting touches in Egypt are followed by the leading of them round and round in their desert wanderings forty years. They were a carnal, earthly, and self-pleasing people among the flesh-pots of Egypt, and under oppression were sinking into all the vices, weaknesses, and superstitions of their slavish condition. God will not settle His land with such; and no mere sudden stroke will drive the evils out of them. It must be done by a lengthened educative process of mingled tenderness and severity:—

> 'Even as a bird each fond endearment tries,
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies.'

By rudimentary instructions, by type and symbol, by the elements of law and prophecy, by passing them through sifting ordeals, by marching them about and about, so as to ventilate their low proclivities, and get rid of their baser qualities, He sought to winnow them of their chaff, letting multitudes of them die, and others be born into a new state of things, until at last they became quite a different people, with other aims and capacities. The eaglets' wings are grown. Their first feeble flight and unearthly flutterings have changed into a bolder and higher swoop. The Lord had stirred them and weaned them from their nest; often, too, He left them to themselves, then came timeously to their rescue, bare them on His pinions, and carried them all the days of old—a process still familiar in the experiences of His graciously taught people, weak and slow in their heavenward flight.

IV. The People themselves like a Stubborn Ox.

13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
And he did eat the increase of the field;
And He made him to suck honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock;
14 Butter of kine, and milk of sheep,
With fat of lambs,
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the fat of kidneys of wheat;
And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.
15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:
Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek:
Then he forsook God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
16 They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods,
With abominations provoked they Him to anger.
17 They sacrificed unto demons, (which were) no God,
To gods whom they knew not,

To new gods that came up of late,
Whom your fathers dreaded not.
18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
And hast forgotten God that gave thee birth.
19 And the LORD saw it, and abhorred them,
Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.
20 And He said, I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end shall be:
For they are a very froward generation,
Children in whom is no faith.

Here are two contrasted pictures: (1) Israel's highly-favoured position, outwardly, in a well-protected and richly-productive land; and (2) their unworthy conduct, as of a pampered and over-fed ox, that resents being put under the yoke.

1. *Their favoured position.* The picture of the eagle and her fledgelings had reference to Israel's *inward* or religious training under God's providence: now, we have a picture of their *outward* or temporal advantages, in having for their home and abode such a country as the Land of Promise. The natural strength of its position, and the rich variety of its products, are the two things specially emphasized. To 'ride on the high places of the earth,' is to feel triumphantly strong and firmly planted on its lofty heights, as on a natural and easily defensible fortress; while 'to eat the increase of the fields,' is to enjoy the plentiful and varied supplies of a goodly land.

Israel was at this time on the rich uplands of Gilead, and had, in these first trans-Jordanic settlements, a fair idea of the nature of the country they were to inhabit, long before they crossed over into their main possessions on the west. Relatively to Egypt and the wilderness, through which they had come, their promised inheritance was one of the high places of earth: a hill-country

strongly fortified by its natural position, and protected from foes on every side—by the Great Sea to the west, the enormously deep and rugged gorge of Jordan on the east, the snow-clad ranges of Lebanon on the north, and the trackless desert to the south—altogether a choice and unique spot, with nothing quite like it on the face of the globe, with every variety of climate in the compass of a few miles, from the tropical heat and vegetation down at the Jordan's mouth, to the perpetual snow of the lofty Mount Hermon: the bottom of the Dead Sea being 2600 feet below the surface of the Mediterranean, and the summit of Hermon well-nigh 10,000 feet above it.

What a contrast between the alluvial plains of Egypt, with its periodically overflowing river, and its system of artificially managed irrigation, and this land of hills and dales, with their gushing springs and flowing streams and perennial wells at every point of elevation—a contrast of which the people were continually being reminded[1]!

The passage in verse 14. which describes the rich variety of the earth's produce, so different from the monotonous fare they had hitherto experienced, consists of a strophe of five lines, and is couched in language of high poetic fervour. 'He made him suck honey out of the rock,' refers either to the large deposits of honeycomb found in stony and rocky crevices, or more probably to the fact that the bees could gather in their fragrant juice from the abundance of aromatic herbs and flowers clothing the rocky hill-sides, so that wealth was obtained where land could neither be dug nor ploughed; while 'oil out of the flinty rock' was a similar testimony to the relative wealth of the land, the thrice valuable olive-tree loving to thrust its gnarled roots in rocky

[1] See Deut. viii. 7–9 and xi. 10–12.

places and amid stony parterres, so that places otherwise barren and unprofitable were clothed with olive-yards, and their immense and profitable fruitage. With these are associated in this land of milk and honey, some products not usually elsewhere joined together—'Butter of kine,' or rather thick curdled milk with its thirst-allaying sourness, that might be kept and mixed for use as a refreshing drink in hot weather, and 'milk of sheep,' or new warm milk; and 'fat of lambs,' not for food [1], but for purposes of light or sacrifice, yet not without flesh-meat if requisite, in the strong flocks of Bashan; and 'the fat of kidneys of wheat,' with its white and wholesome farina, and 'of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.'

'It was a land divine,
A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, flocks; wood, mountain, cornfield, vine.'

What might not have been expected of a people so favourably circumstanced? How faithful and zealous, how uncorrupt and exemplary, might we not unreasonably hope they should prove themselves! But far otherwise was the reality.

We feel something sad and painful is coming, with the 'But' of the fifteenth verse:—

'I do not like this "*But.*" It doth allay
The good precedent. Fie upon this—*but.*
'Tis as a jailer to bring forth
Some monstrous malefactor.'

2. *Their unworthy conduct*, as of a pampered or overfed ox, that resents being put under the yoke.

'But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.' Jeshurun is either a diminutive of affection and endearment, or, being derived from a word signifying 'just or righteous,'

[1] The fat itself was prohibited as food, Lev. iii. 17.

points to the ideal state at which they should have aimed. Alas! as not unfrequently happens, their practice was not according to their privileges, nor their conduct equal to their condition. The image is that of a pampered and over-fed ox which, instead of being tame and tractable from its kind treatment and abundant fodder, proves vicious and stubborn, refusing to bend its neck to the yoke, and resenting all attempts to harness it to the plough. Agricultural labour of every kind was with the Israelites the work not of horses, but of oxen; hence the graphic force of the picture for them. Observe the sudden change in verse 15, where Israel is addressed in the second person, 'Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek.' This direct mode of address, together with the repetition of the cutting sarcasms, lending greater energy to the words. Such an image for the conduct of Israel, in their stubborn intractableness and stiff-necked resistance, like 'a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,' was often used in after-times by the prophets, as in Hosea xiii. 6, 'According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten Me.' Prosperity breeds pride; success begets waywardness; and fulness corruption. Wisdom does not always grow with wealth; and it might moderate our desires for great things to remember that mercies need managing, if they are not to become snares and mischiefs. Israel proved wayward and proudly intractable, by very reason of their abounding comforts and advantages. 'Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.' They chafed and fretted under the operation of the divine law and its discipline, as though it were a hard and bitter yoke. They failed to rise to the spiritual and sublime conceptions and requirements which

it embodied, and by their perpetual lapses into idolatry they showed how much they struggled against its lofty and refining institutes of worship, entangling themselves with strange gods, round whose altars were celebrated pollutions and vices unmentionable, as if they were sacrificing to devils, in ways that were not merely a disgrace to humanity, but a menace to its very existence. Every 'new' god had its attractions for them, however vile. They could only imagine relationship to local, tribal or dynastic deities, whom they clothed with material qualities and forms[1]. Hence their sympathy with the ways of their heathen neighbours, and their affinity for their worship. This was the root of the evil; and 'The LORD saw and abhorred, because of such provocation by His sons and daughters.' And so He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be,' and will let things take their natural course. Hence the ever-recurring experience :—

> 'Our fathers would not know Thy ways,
> And Thou hast left them to their own.'

For Israel was not a favoured people in the sense of being exempt from the operation of those divine laws which they were raised up to execute and vindicate. Equally with the heathen people around them, were they held amenable to the same principles and their solemn sanctions. Equally were they to feel that,

> 'Blood for blood, and blow for blow,
> Thou shalt reap as thou dost sow.'

And if they would not be deterred from evil courses, it was because 'there was no truth in them.'

The secret cause of all their lapses and backsliding, and the severest possible charge against any of them, is

[1] Deut. iv. 15–19.

this—'A froward generation: children in whom is no faith.' Here lay the open sore. Children with no faith become faithless children. Name any evil, be it a vice like self-indulgence or intemperance, or an idolatry like covetousness, or a misery like hopelessness—all is summed up finally here—'*No faith*.' The most evil of all evils and the fount of every kind of evil is, 'The *evil heart of unbelief* in departing from the living God.'

V. Divine Love for Israel like the Fire of Spousal Jealousy.

21 They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities:
And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled in Mine anger,
And burneth unto the lowest pit,
And devoureth the earth with her increase,
And setteth on fire the foundations of the mountains.
23 I will heap mischiefs upon them;
I will spend Mine arrows upon them:
24 (They shall be) wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat
And bitter destruction;
And the teeth of beasts will I send upon them,
With the poison of crawling things of the dust.
25 Without shall the sword bereave,
And in the chambers terror;
(It shall destroy) both young man and virgin,
The suckling with the man of gray hairs.
26 I said, I would scatter them afar,
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:
27 Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misdeem,
Lest they should say, Our hand is exalted,
And the Lord hath not done all this.

28 For they are a nation void of counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.

Unfaithfulness was a peculiarly grave and culpable offence on the part of Israel. For they were a covenant people, who had been often warned and had as often pledged their troth to guard against such miserable relapses and idolatrous tendencies. If there be anything more aggravating than another, it is to deal with people who are ever vowing and pledging their honour to forsake an evil course, and yet are ever found returning to it. Hence the arousing and solemnising presentment, 'They have moved Me to jealousy with their no gods,' or as the next line interprets it, 'They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities.'

Note the nature and cause of the divine jealousy.

The whole conduct of Israel had been like that of some false and faithless betrothed one. They are pictured as fickle and untrue in their attachment to Him whom they had come under solemn engagement to serve. This idea of a covenant-betrothal was no mere question of words. The life and power of their theocratic constitution depended on their realising its force and meaning. Here we have the foundation of all those allusions and images so frequent afterwards, in Psalms and Prophets, based on the marriage relation between Jehovah and Israel; and on the flagrant spiritual apostasy therefore of 'going a whoring after other gods.' The phrase first occurs in Exodus xxxiv. 15; and describes a literal fact, inasmuch as idolatrous worship was always accompanied with positive licentiousness and kindred orgies. Time after time in weary iteration, it seemed to be a settled purpose and policy with them to dishonour and discredit God before their neighbours, whose ways they learned, and at whose altars they were so easily led to worship.

When Israel got settled in ease and comfort in their promised land, how recreant they showed themselves to their high commission! Were they not to be the early police, the moral scavengers to execute the indignation of outraged humanity and offended Deity on tribes and peoples guilty beyond expression, whose diabolical and unmentionable vices and pollutions were connected with their altars and inextricably bound up with their religion? Yet, with them they entered into treaties; made concessions and compromises, and at last became co-partners in their criminal corruptions. It was a scandal on themselves; it was a flagrant breach of faith and promise; it was above all a violation of sacred relationship with God, to Whom they were betrothed in righteousness.

How startling and pathetic the attributing of jealousy to the divine nature! It means that burning holy zeal for the sacred betrothment by which He claims an exclusive right to the affection of His people, brooking no rival and admitting of no competitor in His presence. With poor, ignorant, envious humanity, jealousy involves suspicion, and is the mark often of a weak, warped and narrow nature. But, on the other hand, there is a noble jealousy which, eliminating these evil elements, shows itself in an earnest concern for others' fidelity, joined with some degree of fear for them, or of indignation at their giving to any a just ground for suspecting their faithfulness in the least degree. Such was the noble jealousy of the Apostle Paul about his converts, 'I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ[1].' This godly jealousy, or inviolable regard for His own name and honour, is put by Jehovah Himself into the very heart of His law, as the strongest

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

deterrent from idolatry and the strongest incentive to fidelity in worship. 'Thou shalt have no other God before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image to bow down to and worship. *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.*' Truly, 'Jehovah whose name is Jealous is a jealous God.'

Note how the divine love in its dealing with Israel is like the fire of spousal jealousy.

With their 'no gods'—their worship of material images and their profaning the divine name by associating it with horrible rites and unnatural orgies—they have provoked Me to jealousy, that is, to the exercise and manifestation of a holy indignation and zeal for Mine own honour and the vindication of Mine own name[1]; so will I rouse them to a jealousy about themselves by favouring others that they deem a 'no-nation,' and by bestowing My regards on what they contemptuously look down on and despise as no people at all. Is not this one of the great wheels by which God moves forward the affairs of His providential government; rousing one nation to vie with another which it has hitherto despised, but which is now seen to be outstripping it; or one community to become emulous of another, or one Church to bestir itself, so as not to be outdone by a little-esteemed rival? Thus, forces and energies are brought into play which had otherwise lain dormant; and weapons of the spiritual warfare are burnished, and sharpened and utilised, that had previously been lying rusty and unused.

This principle the Apostle Paul illustrates by the case of the calling in of the Gentiles through their having the Gospel preached unto them; and he shows how this is meant to operate as a divinely-devised provocative

[1] Deut. xxviii. 58–68 and xxix. 10–20.

and stimulus for the bringing in of the Jews themselves in their fulness at length[1]. But there were many previous applications of the principle. Again and again did God move Israel out of its folly and infatuation, as the whole Book of Judges makes evident, not only by bringing in upon them their formidable neighbours, who were allowed to prevail against them and hold them in subjection, but even more strikingly by the very weakest and most despicable of their surrounding foes winning a mastery over them, when the twelve tribes were cut up and divided in their interests by quarrels and disintegration. At such times the fire of the divine spousal jealousy gleamed out upon them; and Heaven's indignation came forth against them like an armed host. For the figure changes at verse 22, and warlike imagery is adopted. The reason is because, while idolatry violated the bond of betrothal, it was no less treason and disloyalty to God as the King and Head of their theocratic government. Hence the penal consequences are represented, in verses 22–25, under the figure of a royal warrior carrying his arms against rebels or traitors, and executing judgment on them to the uttermost, by *war*, *famine* and *pestilence*. The first image is the blazing flame or torch of war, kindled in the heat of divine resentment and burning 'to the lowest hell' (that is, to the last extremity), and licking up 'the earth with her increase' (that is, the harvest and fruitage), and playing round the roots of the mountains, consuming orchard and olive-yard; and thereby accumulating mischiefs and miseries incalculable, like sheaves and showers of fiery arrows. The next image is *famine*, here called

[1] Romans x. 19, and xi. 11, 'through their fall (i.e. the lapse or trespass of Israel) salvation is *come* to the Gentiles to provoke them (i.e. Israel) to jealousy.'

'burning heat,' because of the scorched and blackened ground yielding nothing; and in the train of war and famine comes the *pestilence*, likened to the 'teeth of beasts' and the 'poison fangs' of serpents; all of them involving bitter and cruel destruction, and decimating the population without regard to age or sex, 'the young man and maiden, the suckling and those of grey hairs.' Happily, however, the indignation fire of the divine jealousy is the protecting and guarding fire also of the divine and spousal love.

Note, therefore, that God's jealousy for His name and honour is the ultimate salvation of His people.

This is the real secret of Israel not being utterly and entirely swept away and destroyed. Their final extinction as a people would have been their fit and proper fate, had they been left to reap of their own way and been filled with the fruit of their own devices. That the Lord did not make a complete end of them, as He did of other tribes and peoples, was owing entirely to the regard He had for His own gracious purposes which they had been raised up and qualified to subserve. What else could account for His forbearance, and long-suffering, patient striving with them? 'I said, I would scatter them afar, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I *feared the provocation of the enemy*' (that is, anticipated the bad results of their sarcasms and reproaches): lest their adversaries should mistakenly explain the terrible dispersion, and allege it was all owing to their own prowess, and there was no divine meaning or judgment in it at all. He was resolved so to manage the final catastrophe of Israel, that the world at large would be constrained to say, The finger of God is there; the whole matter is a just retribution, bearing the seal and stamp of a divine

ordering. 'For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.' The lesson would therefore be forced on them from without; and so they would at last acquiesce in what the whole world would be found saying about them. For by terrible things in righteousness would this experience be conveyed.

VI. The Awful Fruits of Apostasy like the Vine of Sodom.

29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end!
30 How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Except their Rock had sold them,
And the Lord had delivered them up?
31 For their rock is not as our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves being judges.
32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah:
Their grapes are grapes of gall,
Their clusters are bitter:
33 Their wine is the poison of dragons,
And the cruel venom of asps.
34 Is not this laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up among My treasures?
35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompence,
At the time when their foot shall slide:
For the day of their calamity is at hand,
And the things that are to come upon them shall make haste.

As the song begins to rush to its close, it assumes the form of vivid dialogue between God and Moses. This gives dramatic force and intensity to the sentiments of the speakers, and lends additional interest to their words. The transitions are often quick and sudden, but always unmistakably clear and noticeable. We readily distinguish the difference between the direct voice divine,

and the echo of it as spoken by Moses. In the one class of passages, God speaks in His own first person, using *I* and *Me*: in the other class of passages God is spoken about in the third person, and Moses is the interlocutor who reiterates and enforces, or explains and applies the words that have just been proceeding direct from the divine lips. Thus in the last passage, verses 21–28, God is introduced as the immediate speaker, using the first personal pronoun, 'They have moved *Me* to jealousy . . . *I* said, *I* would scatter them.'

But in the present passage, beginning at verse 29 and closing with verse 33, it is Moses who is the speaker, responding to God as it were, and re-echoing and rehearsing to the people the force and interpretation of what God has been saying. It is Moses, who, as it were, meditatively steps aside and cries aloud, 'Oh that they were wise, that they understood this: that they would consider their latter end.' In verses 34, 35, a sudden change occurs in the speaker, God being there introduced again in the first person. Moses resumes in verses 36–38; then God in verses 39–42; while in the closing 43rd verse, Moses sums up the final result in one strong, prophetic and authoritative arraignment.

Returning now to verse 29, we find Moses seeking, in words of plaintive appeal, to apply to the nation's conscience the solemn warning that had just fallen from God's own lips. Oh! that they were wise enough to understand how God would be necessitated to withdraw His protection from a faithless and covenant-breaking people, and show mercy to others, so as to provoke Israel to a holy jealousy over themselves. For while the Lord had bound Himself to them by a solemn covenant, their wilful and persistent violation of it set Him free also from its terms. Oh! that they were wise

enough to understand this in time: that they might realise the inevitable issue of their trampling upon their theocratic constitution, and apprehend the awful judgments that must ensue from their repeated apostasies! Oh! that they would consider their latter end! that they would consider the fatal result of incorrigible and perverse idolatry, and on the other hand the glorious result of true and faithful allegiance! How should one chase a thousand in such a case, and two put ten thousand to flight? God is *not always* on the side of great battalions. Let some of the decisive battles of the world give the lie to such a notion. A people, though few, if they be but true, prevail against overwhelming odds, and have often hurled back their vastly preponderating foes. It is faith that atones for lack of numbers. Disorder and disgrace come from wanton and wilful faithlessness. No fatal disaster can long abide, 'except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had delivered them up,' as a reward of their shame. True fealty, rightly rooted, can never be finally overpowered. 'For there is no rock like unto our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.' Here we have on one side 'their rock,' which means the idolaters' false gods, to which apostatising Israel had fallen away; and on the other side 'our Rock,' where Moses identifies himself with believing and faithful Israel in cleaving to the one living and true God as the alone Rock (hence it is spelt with a capital letter)—and he is content to leave the decision as to which rock is the better to the judgment of idolaters themselves, speaking out of their secret convictions and heart-felt experience[1].

[1] For the testimony and verdict of the Egyptians, see Exod. xiv. 25; of Balaam, Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.; and of the Philistines, Joshua ii. 9 or 1 Sam. iv. 8.

'For,' as the vivid and forcible image is conveyed in verse 32, 'their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.' That is to say, the type or emblem of apostate Israel, like that of heathenism itself, is not the real, the true, the cultivated vine, but their type or emblem is the wild, the false, the deleterious plant, producing fruit obnoxious in its nature, distressing in its taste, and poisonous in its effects[1]. Was there such a Sodom-vine, or were there such Gomorrah-grapes? Does this refer to some natural production? to some actual dead-sea fruit? If so, what was the particular plant in question,

'Which grew
Near that bituminous lake where Sodom stood'?

Or is it simply a metaphor? meaning that as Israel, the true Israel, found a fitting representation in the natural vine, the false and apostatising Israel should become so depraved and corrupted that only Sodom and Gomorrah, conceived of as a metaphoric vine, could fitly describe them? The awful evils of Sodom and Gomorrah were like grape-clusters of the degenerate vine of idolatrous worship, and the awful destruction of these cities of the plain was the bitter result of feeding on such dead-sea fruit. This is reiterated and emphasized in the 33rd verse—'their wine is the poison of dragons,' eating into and ulcerating the very bowels and vitals; it is 'the cruel venom of asps,' inevitably working the deadliest of deaths. Ah, 'is not this laid up in store with Me' (it is the voice of God Himself that now speaks), 'sealed up among My treasures?' The great principle of retribution is one of the things stored up in the

[1] See 2 Kings iv. 38–41 for reference to 'the wild vine' and its deleterious 'gourds.'

economy of the divine government; and the case of Sodom and Gomorrah is a treasured and telling illustration of its reality and of the way it is found to work. 'Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having' (says Jude, ver. 7) 'given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.' Often it may seem to sleep; but it is like the sleeping electricity that is slowly accumulating to a lightning flash. Suddenly the bolt falls from the very blue of heaven. When the crisis comes, all things rush to the inevitable stroke. 'Vengeance is Mine, and recompence: I will repay,' saith the Lord. Then whenever the foot slips, the calamity is at hand; and the long-gathering cloud 'makes haste' to discharge its pent-up fury.

'Crimes may long be like shadows, seen not in the dark,
The day at last appears, and justice notes them.'

VII. Divine Retribution like the Flash of a Whetted Sword.

36 For the Lord shall judge His people,
And repent Himself for His servants;
When He seeth that their power is gone,
And there is none remaining, shut up or left at large.
37 And He shall say, Where are their gods,
The rock in which they trusted;
38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise up and help you,
Let them be your protection.
39 See now that I, even I, am He,
And there is no god with Me:
I kill, and I make alive;
I have wounded, and I heal:
And there is none that can deliver out of My hand.
40 For I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say, As I live for ever,

41 If I whet My glittering sword,
And Mine hand take hold on judgement;
I will render vengeance to Mine adversaries,
And will recompense them that hate Me.
42 I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh;
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the head of the leaders of the enemy.

For the Lord shall judge, or rather, shall *sift* His people; and this is the aim of all His varied retributive dealings with them; and when His judgments have taken effect, His repentings and relentings will be kindled together, and will operate alongside of, and in conjunction with, His more awful visitations. When He sees their land desolate, the people scattered, and hardly a remnant left, He will say, as if representing and interpreting the nation's reflections on the cause of all their woes,—Where are our gods, the rock in whom we trusted, which did eat the fat of our sacrifices, and drank the wine of our drink offerings? Should they not be convinced of the infinite disparity between the absolute sovereign Lord of all, their own God, and the miserable crowd of petty deities to whom they had so long and so often paid unlawful and disastrous homage?

And was it not the case that during the seventy years of the dispersion and captivity, the Jewish people learned, as they had never learned before, to hate idolatry and all polytheism? When scattered among the heathen they had been driven in upon themselves, and were forced, so to speak, to become missionaries of their monotheistic faith, and testifiers against the flagrant enormities of impure or idolatrous worship. Zeal for the exclusive honour of Jehovah, the one living and true God, became at last with them a fixed and irrevocable principle, and aversion to all idolatrous and pagan practices

became one of the strongest features in their national character. The suffering, degraded, and abject state to which their tendency to idolatry reduced them. was one of the means of convincing them of the vanity and folly of all idols, and of the futility of thinking that stocks and stones could rise up to help and protect them.

Thus the conclusion was driven home to their conscience. 'See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I wound and I heal: and none can deliver out of My hand.' Other evils they were to adopt and follow; but they could never be ensnared any more by the fascinations of dark idolatry. The long black night of the captivity and dispersion had seemed to give forth to them the divine mocking voice of challenge, 'Where are the gods in which you trusted? let them now rise and help you.' Of every tendency to polytheism they were finally cured, though their stiff-necked and untractable stubbornness was to manifest itself in other false and fatal directions, which rendered it necessary for them to have the divine oath of judgment and mercy ever standing forth in unmistakable emphasis before their eyes. The *form* of that inviolable oath is given in the 40th verse: '*I lift up My hand to heaven*, and say, *As I live for ever*': while the solemn *matter* of the oath follows in verses 41 and 42. 'If I whet My glittering sword,' or, as the Hebrew phrase is, 'the *lightning* of My sword.' The chief thing here to be noticed, after the startling and terrifying power of the imagery employed, is the *introverted* parallelism in verse 42, where the first and third, and the second and fourth lines, are to be conjoined; thus:—

'I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood,
With the blood of the slain and the captives:
And My sword shall devour flesh
From the head (i.e. the chief) of the leaders of the enemy.'

With this awe-inspiring threatening and oath, the song suddenly stops short, in order to introduce a closing climax more effectively.

VIII. The Final Issues of Judgment and Mercy.

43 Rejoice, O ye nations, (with) His people :
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And will render vengeance to His adversaries,
And will make expiation for His land, for His people.

There is something significant in this abrupt introducing of the nations or Gentile peoples. It is fitted to startle and arouse attention. The very enigmatic style of the announcement seems to hint at something that is meant to be profoundly suggestive, as if the passage contained more, much more than meets the eye. We have here the fundamental prophecy of a golden age which lay at the heart of the Jewish theocracy ; the vision and dawn of some great future change that should result from the divine dealings with Israel, and in which both they and the world at large should together happily share. No doubt the announcement is as yet dim and hazy, but it is a prophetic gleam radiant with hope and fraught with practical power. However we may render the first line —whether, adhering to the ordinary Hebrew text, which has no preposition corresponding to the 'with,' we translate it, 'Rejoice, O ye nations, His people,' or 'Praise His people, O ye nations' ; or whether we adopt the Septuagint, which is also the interpretation of the apostle in Romans xv. 10, and read it, 'Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people'—the sense is still the same. The destiny of the nations is seen to be wrapped up with that of Israel itself. Amid all the hopes and fears of mingled judgment and mercy, there will be triumph at last in expiation, and favour, and propitiousness for the

wide earth and its ransomed people. The scattering of Israel in wrath and judgment would be a mercy to the world at large. Or, as it is expressed in what is the true commentary on this great prophetic word. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ch. xi. 'If the fall of the Jew be the riches of the world, and their loss be the Gentiles' gain: how much more their fulness?'—or, 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall their restoration or reinstatement be, but life from the dead?' And who will say that this very song is not even yet destined to exert a potent influence on the hearts and hopes of the scattered and feeble remnant of God's ancient people? or that it may not be sung by Jew and Gentile locked finally in the bonds of a sacred brotherhood, no more as prophecy, but as history or prophecy fulfilled? 'Rejoice, ye nations, with His people: for He *has* avenged the blood of His servants, and made expiation, and been propitious for His land and people.'

THE SONG OF DEBORAH.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH.

Judges v.

1 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on
that day, saying,
2 For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,
For that the people offered themselves willingly,
Bless ye the LORD.
3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes;
I, even I, will sing unto the LORD;
I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.
4 LORD, when Thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When Thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
5 The mountains flowed down at the presence of the LORD,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of the LORD, the God
of Israel.
6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the high ways were unoccupied,
And the travellers walked through byways.
7 The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,
Until that I Deborah arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.
8 They chose new gods;
Then was war in the gates:
Was there a shield or spear seen
Among forty thousand in Israel?
9 My heart is toward the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly among the people:
Bless ye the LORD.
10 Tell of it, ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit on rich carpets,
And ye that walk by the way.
11 Far from the noise of archers, in the places of drawing water,
There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD,
Even the righteous acts of His rule in Israel.
Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.
12 Awake, awake, Deborah;
Awake, awake, utter a song:
Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of
Abinoam.

13 Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people;
The LORD came down for me against the mighty.
14 Out of Ephraim came down they whose root is in Amalek;
After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples;
Out of Machir came down governors,
And out of Zebulun they that handle the marshal's staff.
15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
As was Issachar, so was Barak;
Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.
By the watercourses of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.
16 Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
At the watercourses of Reuben
There were great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan:
And Dan, why did he remain in ships?
Asher sat still at the haven of the sea,
And abode by his creeks.
18 Zebulun was a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death,
And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field.
19 The kings came and fought;
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo:
They took no gain of money.
20 They fought from heaven,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
21 The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, march on with strength.
22 Then did the horsehoofs stamp
By reason of the pransings, the pransings of their strong ones.
23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;
Because they came not to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.
24 Blessed above women shall Jael be,
The wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

25 He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
26 She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head,
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.
27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.
28 Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
29 Her wise ladies answered her,
Yea, she returned answer to herself,
30 Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?
A damsel, two damsels to every man;
To Sisera a spoil of divers colours,
A spoil of divers colours of embroidery,
Of divers colours of embroidery on both sides, on the necks of the spoil?
31 So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD:
But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

THIS song marks a great crisis in Israel's history. It celebrates their crowning triumph over the Canaanites, in the last stand and rally made by these old inhabitants to repossess their country. More than a century has elapsed since Joshua signally defeated them in the great battle by the Waters of Merom, and drove the remains of their broken tribes into the far north, about the roots of Lebanon. Quietly, however, they had been gathering strength and unity: and were now sufficiently recovered and consolidated, that when Israel lapsed into idolatrous abominations, the Lord could make use of them as a scourge and punishment to His backsliding people.

'Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan.' JABIN (meaning *the wise or discerning*) was the common name for the leading chief who ruled in HAZOR [1], just as the hereditary title of the King of Egypt was Pharaoh, or, in earlier times, Abimelech. It was a Jabin who appeared at the head of the confederate Canaanites in the days of Joshua; and now another Jabin, inhabiting the same capital, rebuilt out of its former ashes, had organised another confederacy of these northern peoples, and had made such headway as to have reduced apostatising Israel to the most humiliating servitude. So oppressive was his iron grasp and so formidable his military array, that Israel lay helplessly submissive and dispirited under him for twenty long years. Never had the national spirit seemed to have sunk so low, and never had it been so difficult to rouse the people to a great effort for their emancipation.

At this desperate crisis in their fortunes it is a woman who appears upon the scene, Deborah, 'wife of Lapidoth,' which is by some rendered rather 'a woman of fiery spirit,' and whose name, signifying 'a Bee,' has led an old Puritan to remark, that she had honey for the friends and a sting for the foes of her country.

[1] Hazor means 'camp,' 'court,' or 'enclosure.' There are many towns and places called Hazor or Hazar in Scripture, now difficult to identify, like Hazar-addar, Hazar-enan, Hazar-shual, Hazor in Benjamin, and, still more important, the far-off Hazor of Kedar, respecting which Jeremiah (xlix. 28-33) utters a great prophecy '*Concerning the kingdoms of Hazor.*' The Hazor of Jabin was within the territory of the northern tribe of Naphtali, and was one of the two Hazors given to that tribe, as mentioned in Joshua xix. 36, 37. It apparently lay to the south of Kedesh in Naphtali, and was certainly near the Waters of Merom, now called Huleh, and by Josephus the Lake of Senechonitis. Dr. W. M. Thomson believes (*The Land and the Book*, i. 435) that he has found the vast remains of the old city at *Hazere*, covering a large natural basin and stretching far up the hillside to the south: and in *'Ain-Hazur* he recognises the En-Hazor, the well of Hazor in Naphtali, also.

There is a beautiful and dignified simplicity in her mode of life, suited to her circumstances and calling. In her tent, spread under a well-known palm-tree, away up among the heights of Ephraim, she judged the people and acted as their prophetess in hazardous times. The position was a convenient and central one, beside the main thoroughfare running north and south, and not far from where had stood the famous oak or terebinth tree of another Deborah, Jacob's nurse, who had been buried under it four centuries before. Thither the children of her people could resort, with more or less secrecy, to their judge and oracle, as to a 'Mother in Israel,' who had won their hearts and risen to deserved influence and renown among them. She strove to inspire them with her own ardent patriotism; but this was no easy task when their leaders were dispersed, or cowered with terror before Jabin and his formidable array of 900 iron chariots.

At last, as if to reward her efforts, there appeared a dawn of reviving national spirit; a fresh hope sprang up in the breast of this more than Joan of Arc or Boadicea of her times. Prompt to seize the opportunity, and initiate a bold and warlike policy, she directs the eyes of the people to a military leader, belonging as usual to the tribe which had suffered most severely from the oppressor. In the northern tribe of Naphtali was the famous little sanctuary, Kedesh-Naphtali[1], the holy place of Naphtali. It was there that Joshua overthrew the combined hosts under the first Jabin; and there another captain had been growing up, who was destined to overwhelm the hosts of the second Jabin with an equally signal defeat. Here dwelt BARAK, whose name

[1] Identified as still bearing its ancient name, and situated on a high ridge in a splendid region north-west of Lake Hulch (Waters of Merom). Robinson, iii. 366.

(which occurred long afterwards under the Phœnician or Carthaginian form of *Barca*, another military genius) means *lightning*, and fitly symbolises the vivid and swift flashing outburst of his electric charge.

To him Deborah is instructed by a divine commission to despatch an urgent summons, requiring him to undertake the dangerous enterprise. But such was even his disheartened state of feeling that he shrinks from the task, unless Deborah consents to appear in person, to support and direct the movement with her character and authority. Deborah's ascendency at this supreme moment was complete. With a gentle rebuke at his faint-hearted faith, and with a prediction that a woman at last should snatch from him most of the final glory, Deborah repairs to Kedesh-Naphtali ; and with equal courage and wisdom raises there the standard of revolt for Zebulon and Naphtali, almost within sight of Jabin's capital, while appointing the muster to be at Mount Tabor[1], where the tribes could gather without fear of those terrible war-chariots of Jabin, and their great hooks and scythes attached to the wheels, which were the peculiar dread and horror of the men of Israel. And so formidable and well appointed was the military power of Jabin, that he did not need to take the field himself, but could commit the campaign in modern fashion to his commander-in-chief, SISERA, who dwelt at Harosheth[2] of the Gentiles, where Jabin had his great iron-foundries, about a day's march distant. Sisera deployed with his chariots into the plain of Esdraelon, and pushed across the Kishon to the south

[1] Now Jebel Tor, about 1755 feet above the level of the sea.

[2] 'It comes from the Hebrew word signifying a *smith*, and indicates the smitheries where the iron was forged. Probably now El Harethîyeh, a hill or mound at the south-eastern corner of *Acca*—on the north side of the Kishon, yet so near the foot of Carmel as only to leave a passage for the river.' Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, ch. xxix.

of Jezreel, to prevent, if possible, the men of Ephraim and Manasseh from joining Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali. The broad valley of Jezreel [1], the only one in Palestine large enough to admit of chariots and cavalry freely manœuvring, has been the great battle-field of the country from earliest to latest times. In form it is an isosceles triangle, with its western apex

[1] The central portion of the great slope, stretching down from Tabor, Little Hermon and Gilboa, was properly the Valley of Jezreel (now *Wâdy Jâlûd*), from the remarkable old town at its opening. Jezreel became in Greek Esdraelon, and this name was ultimately extended to the entire stretch of plain as well as the central valley. The most *southern* section of Esdraelon was the Valley of Megiddo; and it was at this point the battle of Barak against Sisera was first *joined*, though the pursuit extended away westward along the Kishon, and northward up the valley toward Harosheth beyond the river. Most of this lovely region belonged to Issachar, to whose lot it fell—'He saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant'—though Megiddo and the south portion belonged to warlike Manasseh. This glorious plain, whether we call it Esdraelon, Jezreel, or Megiddo, has been the great battle-ground of Palestine, and with its surrounding heights, the noble Carmel to the west, and the wooded Tabor and the bare hills of Gilboa and Samaria along its eastern side, has resounded more with the shout of contending foes than any other spot. It resembles nothing so much as the plain of Stirling, the battle-ground of Scotland, situated in like manner at the opening of the Highlands. Here and on the neighbouring heights, Israel and its early foes, Canaanites, Midianites, and Amalekites, with the Philistines; and in later days Jews and Gentiles, Saracens and Crusaders, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Turks, Arabs, French, and British, have all been engaged in deadly conflict. Joshua at 'the Waters of Megiddo'; Deborah and Barak at the same spot, encountering Sisera; Gideon and his three hundred in the Valley of Jezreel, in 'the day of Midian'; Saul at Gilboa; the good King Josiah defeated and slain by Egyptian invaders in 'the Valley of Megiddo'; and, coming to far later days, Guy de Lusignan, the last Latin King of Jerusalem, made prisoner, and the flower of Christian chivalry destroyed on the upland plain of Hattin, when the Crusaders made their last stand against the Saracens; and in yet more recent times the famous battle of Tabor, in which the French general Kleber overthrew the Turks; and the siege of Acre, with the echo of the British guns from the bay resounding from the hills – these are among the memorable warlike events for ever associated with this famous spot. It may well be, therefore, that this great battle-ground, the plain of Megiddo, was before the mind of the Apostle John when, describing in apocalyptic vision the theatre of final conflict between the powers of good and evil, he calls the scene by a play on the very word itself, *Ar-Maggedon*, 'the city or hill of Megiddo'– the fit title for that great mystic battle in which the confederate hosts of Antichrist and Apostasy are to be effectually and for ever overthrown.

at Carmel, where the Kishon rushes past the hill, and its two other angles at Mount Tabor to the north, and Mount Gilboa to the south, of its eastern base. The Kishon, fed by numberless rivulets from the acclivities both north and south, flows through its centre, and rising rapidly after any rain, becomes in its flooded state exceedingly dangerous all along its banks.

On the top of Tabor, with its level and oval-shaped area of about a mile in circuit, Barak took up his position with his 10,000 men, poorly armed, and a mere handful compared with the hosts under Sisera. With keenest interest, and not without alarm and trepidation, must they have watched the movements of the enemy crossing the plain to the southward in endless array. It must have looked like madness to venture down upon that host where the chariots had such free room to play; and that he consented on Deborah's orders to descend to the attack is the chief evidence that it was 'by faith' Barak 'waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens.' With eagle eye Deborah watched the gradual drawing of the enemy toward Taanach, about thirteen miles south-east from Tabor, and encamping where the 'Waters of Megiddo' join the Kishon as it flows in broader stream from the accumulated rivulets through the meadows below. No sooner are the Canaanites in their quarters for the night, than Deborah issues her orders to Barak and his followers to leave their advantageous but unavailing post on the hill-top. They cross over by Nain and Endor to the southern Gilboa slopes, and still inclining to the left, so as to avoid the low and marshy ground, they seem to have come upon the sleeping hosts of the Canaanites by the first faint light of the morning.

The narrative gives no particulars of the onset: but it

records its success: 'the LORD discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak;' a form of expression which seems to point to a providential coincidence which amazingly contributed to the result. For apparently, just when Barak came down like a thunderbolt on the unprepared Canaanites, a fearful storm of sleet and rain gathered from the east, and burst in terrific fury full in their face; the Israelites, on the other hand, having it only in their rear, were not only greatly aided by it, but were inspired by a sense of the very elements themselves being supernaturally in their favour:—

> 'Fierce rain with lightning mixed, and armed with ice,
> And snow and hail, and stormy gust and flaw.'

Panic and confusion took the place of pomp in the hosts of Jabin. The battle became a rout. The treacherous Kishon meantime rose in flood; the plain became a quagmire; and the chariots only make confusion worse confounded, plunging miserably through the swamp. To the entangled and panic-stricken forces there is no alternative but to allow themselves to be driven north-westward for the pass that led up to Harosheth [1]. There, horses, chariots, and men become mixed in irretrievable confusion, jostling and treading on each other just where they must cross the Kishon as it flows swiftest and deepest, dashing up against the steep base of Carmel. Rank by rank the flying host plunges madly in, those behind crushing those before into the mud, while hundreds are being swept away in the swollen and foaming torrent. The discomfiture

[1] Thus the scene of this battle was almost identical with the famous battle of Tabor, in which Kleber repulsed the Turks, driving them, as has been said, 'into the treacherous quagmires which now, as in 1799, or as in the time of Sisera, nearly twenty-four centuries earlier, fringe the course of the apparently insignificant stream of Kishon.'

is not less sudden than complete, the dismal end of Sisera himself sealing the doom of the confederacy. Having early lost all control over his battalions, and seeing the inevitable result, the dismayed and baffled general, unable to force his chariot through the adhesive clay, and in imminent danger of being swept along with the maddened crowd, steals away on foot, a helpless fugitive, up one of the ravines running north-eastward among the hills, to meet his doom at the hands of Jael.

Such were the circumstances originating and engaging this remarkable song of Deborah, one of the most splendid and yet most difficult effusions in the foremost rank of Hebrew poetry; recognised by critics of every school, from its antique phraseology and from its whole archaic cast and structure, to be a genuine production of the age in which it purports to have been written. Everything confirms the impression derived from the song itself that it was Deborah, and none but she, who was inspired to pen it: she and Barak leading the first grand rehearsal of it in presence of the victorious tribes on the occasion of the great gathering for solemn public thanksgiving and praise. Borne away by the ecstasy and afflatus of the religious impulse, how loftily the rapt prophetess sweeps along her majestic theme, pouring out her whole soul in this patriotic and pious outburst of devout joy and gratitude! Its strains are lofty and impassioned; its images vivid and arresting; its transitions abrupt and varied; and its whole style compressed and elevated, rising in energy to the very close, when it reaches the sublime. After brief prelude in three verses, the song divides into three main parts of narrative; and each part of itself again into three divisions, with an occasional interlude, as if for a chorus; and then the final seal and climax in the closing refrain, 'So let all

Thine enemies perish, O LORD; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.'

THE PRELUDE.

1 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on
that day, saying,
2 For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,
For that the people offered themselves willingly,
Bless ye the LORD.
3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes;
I, even I, will sing unto the LORD;
I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.

This, like its predecessors, is emphatically a *God-song*. Warlike and defiant in tone and temper, it is essentially a song OF God, TO God, FOR God: and although the devotional or religious spirit pervades it less than those already noticed, it has the same key-note as theirs. 'Bless ye the LORD,' and 'I will sing praise to the LORD,' indicate a real and true kinship of desire and aim with theirs, even if it be not so persistent or pronounced. The one thought uppermost in the soul of the warrior-poetess is still the idea of supreme indebtedness to the covenant-keeping God of Israel for this great triumph. Her first duty and privilege is therefore to sound a note of praise to the LORD, and to open her song with an outburst of grateful joy and thanksgiving to His name. So far as human effort had had any share in contributing to the result — and she allows that it was the spirit of patriotic unity among leaders and people that had availed to carry the day — yet even this has been achieved by the divine blessing and favour. And therefore it is that for this very outburst of united activity, 'for that the leaders led[1] and the people volun-

[1] The word here is a very difficult one, occurring only twice in the singular, and once again in the plural, Deut. xxxii. 42. It is the same root

teered,' she summons all to praise Jehovah, and she herself will be their leader here again. Then turning to the captive chiefs and princes, she bids them listen while she tells to whom alone the victory is due: or the call to the kings and princes may be taken as a lofty sarcasm and defiance addressed to the as yet unsubdued surrounding heathen and Canaanitish chieftains: that they may be warned and taught their danger and their surely coming doom, if they persist in their confederacy against Israel.

PART I.

A Rehearsal of Events: in Three Sections.

4 Lord, when Thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When Thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
5 The mountains flowed down at the presence of the Lord,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel.
6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the high ways were unoccupied,
And the travellers walked through byways.
7 The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,
Until that I Deborah arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.
8 They chose new gods;
Then was war in the gates:
Was there a shield or spear seen
Among forty thousand in Israel?
9 My heart is toward the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly among the people:
Bless ye the Lord.
10 Tell of it, ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit on rich carpets,
And ye that walk by the way.

as Pharaoh or king, but refers to the flying locks of hair of one in rapid motion: and is a very *crux* for interpreters. The translation 'For the *avenging* of Israel' is from the Syriac; but the one now adopted is from the Alexandrine Codex of the Septuagint.

11 Far from the noise of archers, in the places of drawing water,
There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD,
Even the righteous acts of His rule in Israel.
Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.
12 Awake, awake, Deborah;
Awake, awake, utter a song:
Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

The first of these three strophes opens with a solemn ascription and direct address to Jehovah, as if uttered in His own immediate felt presence, and as avowing that the battle was the Lord's—a customary beginning of songs of triumph, after the manner used by Moses. For the recent victory recalls to the prophetess the glories of the Exodus, with its wonderful and gracious interpositions of the divine hand for Israel's deliverance; and so, in the fourth and fifth verses, she is describing the Theophany or appearance of God on behalf of His people in the great tempest so favourable for them, and so discomfiting to the enemy. By powerful yet poetic and picturesque phrases she describes the thunderstorm gathering away in the south-east among the mountains of Seir or highlands of Edom; and by a deft and cunning touch she associates this so suggestively with 'yonder Sinai,' in the same region, with the same or kindred effects as of old, in the dark lowering heavens full of thunder, and the earth full of trembling, and the clouds full of hail and rain, and men's hearts full of awe and panic-terror, as though the mountains were flowing down on them at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel[1].

In the second strophe, verses 6-9, Deborah rapidly but graphically recalls the country's fallen and miserable

[1] For the tempest and storm from Idumea, see Josephus' *Antiquities*, v. 5. 4: and for parallel passage see Psalm lxviii. 8, 9.

plight in the immediately preceding years, when under the iron heel of Jabin the people were utterly sunk in despondency; the land was depopulated and desolate; traffic and intercourse almost ceased or were kept up by stealthy means, for the highways were deserted, and men had to betake themselves to secret by-paths or lonely mountain-passes, so universal was the sense of the danger and degradation of being openly seen on any journey. Had they not been stripped of their arms, whether for defence or offence, and where was there 'shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand of Israel'? And all this was owing to their faithlessness and idolatry; for from the time of their having 'new gods' there had been nothing but internecine strife and rapine, 'there was war in their very gates.' Peaceful pursuits were interrupted; the body politic was disorganised; bands of marauders were free to plunder or murder the peaceful citizens, without being called to account; and few had spirit enough, and fewer still had weapons, to defend themselves against the cruel wrong. What a sombre and woeful picture this, of universal helplessness, dejection, and degradation!

But it is now all past and over. Deborah is suddenly conscious of her great victory and of the mighty change it will entail. And she remembers how much was due to the chiefs and people who had responded to her patriotic call at a critical moment, and had risen at last in the new and irresistible might of their ancient faith, to crush the oppressor and cast off his yoke. 'My heart,' she says, 'is drawn out in sentiments of grateful respect and regard for the governors of Israel that volunteered to go about the enterprise among the people;' and she calls on them to join with her in blessing and praising God, who had inspired them with the vigorous

resolution, and who had endowed them with the ardour and strength necessary to carry it through so successfully and triumphantly. 'Bless ye the LORD,'—and not ye only, but let all who are yet to profit by such a deliverance, let all the people, high and low, rich and poor, men and maidens, elders and commonalty, join in the song, with the returning warriors amid their spoils and glory. There is a threefold division of the people here, into what we would now call the upper, middle, and lower classes. Tell of it, *ye who ride on white asses*: that is, ye nobles and grandees. Asses of a pure white, or of a richly dappled or mottled colour, were animals of great scarcity and costliness, and could only be ridden by people of the highest rank and consideration. *Ye that sit on rich carpets,* or recline on divans, are the elders, officials, judges, or those in easy and comfortable circumstances who held a middle rank; while 'ye who walk by the way' are the great mass of the toiling community who have to travel on foot. '*Far from* the noise of archers,' or '*louder* than the noise of archers,' or perhaps more simply '*instead of* the noise of archers,' hateful and hostile around the gates and wells and watering troughs, another and a peaceful vision rises to our view[1], of people quietly gathering again to the wells and the town gates in comfort and security to do their business. And the summons is to all classes to join in rehearsing the great mercies of the Lord in ridding the land of marauders and oppressors who invested alike the wells or fountains, and the city gates, where business was wont to be transacted or justice was done.

[1] The beginning of verse 11 is difficult. Many render 'archers' as 'dividers' of the spoil, or as 'flock-dividers.' The word 'noise' is referred by some to the clattering cogs of the water-wheels, or similar sounds at the wells.

'Sing ye that ride as rulers ride; ye that on carpets sit,
Praise God ye poorer wayfarers, because it is most fit.
When our daughters to the fountains in the cool of evening hie,
No archers with their cruel arrows now are lurking by.
Where noise of war was loudest, and where fields were lost and won,
Let thankful hymns ascend to God at setting of the sun.
All o'er the peaceful country, and all through the busy town,
When flocks are in the fold, and tools of labour are laid down.
From lips of young and old let rise the solemn sound of praise
To the Holy One who has given us peace and freedom in our days.
Awake, awake, O Deborah, awake and raise the song,
Rise Barak, lead in triumph your captive ones along.
For the poorest now have justice, and the weakest have their right,
And the humble rule the princes who oppressed them in their might.
So praise the God of Israel, who is faithful to His word,
Yea, praise the Lord Jehovah, Hallelujah, praise the LORD.'

PART II.

THE CONFLICT: IN THREE SECTIONS.

13 Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people;
The LORD came down for me against the mighty.
14 Out of Ephraim came down they whose root is in Amalek;
After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples;
Out of Machir came down governors,
And out of Zebulun they that handle the marshal's staff.
15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
As was Issachar, so was Barak;
Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.
By the watercourses of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.
16 Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
At the watercourses of Reuben
There were great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan:
And Dan, why did he remain in ships?

Asher sat still at the haven of the sea,
And abóve by his creeks.
18 Zebulun was a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death,
And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field.
19 The kings came and fought;
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo:
They took no gain of money.
20 They fought from heaven,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
21 The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, march on with strength.
22 Then did the horsehoofs stamp
By reason of the pransings, the pransings of their strong ones.

Deborah, in going over the muster-roll, pays a warm and touching tribute to the gallantry of the tribes who had at once obeyed her summons and gathered to her call. The thirteenth verse is a difficult one, and the precise meaning has been much controverted. It may most probably be best taken in the way of simple narration, as in both the text and margin of our common versions; but not impossibly as a dramatic record of her military order 'Then (said I), Descend, ye remnant of the nobles of the people! Jehovah, descend for me among (or against) the mighty.' In any case, the eulogium is clear and unmistakable of those who joined the standard on Mount Tabor, and rushed down upon the foe. These were the hillsmen of Ephraim, whose strongholds were among the old Amalekite uplands[1]; a band of Benjaminites, with their war-cry, 'After thee, Benjamin:' 'Governors' or valiant leaders 'out of Machir,' that is, Western Manasseh (Machir having been the

[1] For the meaning of the words 'Ephraim, whose root is in Amalek,' see Judges xii. 15, where the land of Ephraim is said to be 'in the hill country of the Amalekites.'

eldest son of Manasseh and chief of the tribe[1]); choice warriors out of Zebulun, whose peculiar description, 'they that handle the marshal's staff,' seems to refer to their high place on the staff or muster-roll of their people: while those from Issachar were very 'princes' in the fight, heart and soul with Deborah, yea, 'Issachar was the reliance of Barak,' foremost in their eagerness to rush down themselves with him into the valley—a mark of extraordinary valour and daring, to encounter on foot the dreaded iron chariots in the plain below.

But if Deborah has praise for the brave, what scornful taunts she has for those who had played the coward and kept aloof or were laggards in the fight! Among the recreant defaulters were—the pastoral tribe of Reuben, which had betrayed on this occasion, as on others, the weak and negative character of Reuben himself, of whom Jacob said, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel' (out of this tribe had never come any great judge, prophet, or other capable man), and which again had debated and deliberated till the time for action was allowed to pass; and so it brought down on itself the reproachful but well-deserved rebuke, twice repeated, for preferring the music of the sheepfolds by its peaceful watercourses, to the shrill clarion of the soldier at the seat of war—the nomadic tribes in Gilead beyond Jordan, the men of Gad and the eastern half-tribe of Manasseh, who lingered ignominiously in their Havoth-jair or villages of tents on their hazy uplands—while the maritime interests were 'conspicuous by their absence,' Dan and Asher preferring their commerce and their fisheries by the sea-coast. The contrast is heightened by a further reference to the magnanimous conduct of the two most northerly tribes which had most felt

[1] See Gen. l. 23; Numb. xxvii. 1.

and suffered under the great oppression, and upon whom the honour as well as the burden mostly fell of achieving the deliverance; Zebulun, with all the generous enterprise of a seafaring community ('Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy *going out*,' was its motto), 'a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death'; and Naphtali, though its cognisance were a timid 'hind,' was equally forward 'on the high places of the field.' Most strangely of all, the premier tribe of Judah and its southern neighbour Simeon are never once mentioned as taking any part whatever in the great deliverance.

And is it not ever thus, in any arduous and difficult undertaking? Some, like Reuben, promise fair and make large noise in wordy debate, but it comes to nothing; others, like the men of Gilead, consult their own ease; others, like Dan and Asher, are too engrossed in their own private concerns; and others still, like Judah and Simeon, remain silent and aloof. But the work, nevertheless, gets done; the high and hard places of the field are eagerly occupied by the noble and self-sacrificing Zebuluns and Naphtalis, and the Lord comes down with power among those few but faithful ones to nerve them for the fight, and make them mighty to conquer and prevail.

The third section of this part of the song presents us with a picture of the fight and the flight in the terse and glowing terms of verses 19 to 23; but we have considered this already in the introduction, to which we would therefore refer the reader.

PART III.

The Issue: in Three Sections.

23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;

Because they came not to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.
24 Blessed above women shall Jael be,
The wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
25 He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
26 She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head,
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.
27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.
28 Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
29 Her wise ladies answered her,
Yea, she returned answer to herself,
30 Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?
A damsel, two damsels to every man;
To Sisera a spoil of divers colours,
A spoil of divers colours of embroidery,
Of divers colours of embroidery on both sides, on the necks of the spoil[1]?
31 So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD:
But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

In this last strophe we have again three sections:—the burst of malediction on Meroz; the episode of Jael; and the grandest master-stroke of all, the dialogue and scene in the palace of Sisera at Harosheth of the Gentiles.

The final chorus, in verse 31, is the solemn seal and crown of the whole song.

Malediction on Meroz. The site of Meroz has not

[1] By the change of a letter, one scholar has conjectured the reading to be 'for the neck of the Queen.'

been determined. It seems to have lain on the route either of the fleeing squadrons of Canaan or of the fugitive Sisera, somewhere on the borders of Issachar and Zebulun. Its crime was, it had done nothing when it had both the call and the opportunity of doing some signal service at a critical moment. And although the place seems blotted out of existence, its dishonoured name has been thus gibbeted for all time as a warning against neglected duty and despised opportunity.

Episode of Jael. Sisera, hastening up one of the ravines towards Bit-Zanaaim, reached, after long and weary toil, the secluded tents of Heber the Kenite, sheikh of a Bedouin tribe friendly to Jabin, ten or twelve miles off, pitched for their winter-quarters further south than usual. In the absence of the chief, his wife Jael receives the fugitive, extends to him her hospitality, and affords him the pledge of friendship and security by opening the large skin bottle of curded, and perhaps somewhat intoxicating, milk. She threw around him the rough covering of her own tent; and encouraged by all these circumstances of fancied safety, Sisera is soon fast asleep after his exhausting defeat and fatigue. When Jael received him it was doubtless in good faith; but seeing in her guest no longer a great general, but a baffled and helpless fugitive, and dreading the vengeance of the pursuing Barak, she is seized by a mighty and overmastering impulse to despatch the refugee. Seizing with her left hand one of the large pegs or nails which fastened down the tent ropes, and with her right the ponderous mallet, she strikes a blow of frenzied excitement, transfixing his temples, and driving the pin even into the earth. What are we to make of this dread act of fatal violence? and what especially of Deborah's words of eulogy and exultation?

'For blessed above women shall the wife of Heber be:
Of all the Kenite families the noblest matron she.
For vain had Barak's valour been his people to deliver,
And Kishon redly flowing, that ancient angry river,
Had womanly relentings made weak the hand of Jael,
Who wielded well the hammer, who drove the deadly nail.'

One has said, 'If in the great Indian mutiny we had heard of Nana Sahib being entrapped and killed, faithlessly no doubt, but on principles of self-preservation, by some wild woman of a wandering tribe, we can well understand how newspaper correspondents would refer to her name, and public opinion at home would have re-echoed the sentiments of satisfaction with the result, and the woman would have become a heroine in the annals of the famous campaign.' The deed of Jael was treacherous and cruel; nevertheless, we do not know all the motives and circumstances of the case; and there were evidently circumstances and motives of a nobler and heroic cast mingling with the worse ones, so that Deborah could say she was glorified by her tribe and her name was dear to Israel. Meanwhile, Barak in hot pursuit appears before the tent, and the fierce and crafty chieftainess brings to him the evidence, full and conclusive, that Israel's triumph is now complete.

Scene in the Palace of Harosheth. By a sudden and striking prosopopœia, while we are yet looking at the dead body in the tent of Jael, we are introduced to the distant palace of Harosheth, and hear the mother of Sisera discuss with her attendants the anticipated and anxiously awaited spoil. None but a woman could devise such a master-stroke. It shows the deep insight of Deborah into the frivolity and even baser traits of Oriental female character, with no views at such a time beyond dress and ornament and personal advantage;

and no joys beyond the glutting of the warrior with lust and slaves and kindred spoil. How the whole passage is edged with keenest irony at the delusive hopes of an enemy, intent only on the spoils, and never once themselves dreaming of their own defeat!

The song closes with an apostrophe or prediction of a similar and sure disappointment and fatal issue for every evil cause; while brighter and brighter must wax the course of God's kingdom on the earth, like the sun shining forth in its strength towards the effulgence of perfect day. It is at once a principle, a prediction, and a prayer. *A principle*: for there is a divine cause and interest of God in the world, often obscured by human passion, often clouded with sad disaster, like the sun wading through mist and storm, but destined ever to re-assert itself and establish its bright ascendency. *A prediction.* Every inimical interest must and shall give way and succumb to His undying kingdom, with the seed divine of immortal youth within its bosom,

> 'And the power of each foe, as if smote with the sword,
> Shall melt like the snow in the glance of the Lord.'

A prayer. So is it, so it shall be; and so says the singer, *let it be.* Only, he makes it clear that it is not Israel's cause or Israel's enemies *as such*, but simply as these and other interests affect the highest and divinest interests among men—

> 'So let all *Thine* enemies perish, O LORD:
> But let them that love *Him* be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.'

THE SONG OF HANNAH.

The Song of Hannah.

1 And Hannah prayed, and said:
My heart exulteth in the Lord,
Mine horn is exalted in the Lord:
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.
2 There is none holy as the Lord;
For there is none beside Thee:
Neither is there any rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly;
Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth:
For the Lord is a God of knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed.
4 The bows of the mighty men are broken,
And they that stumbled are girded with strength.
5 They that were full have hired out themselves for bread;
And they that were hungry have ceased:
Yea, the barren hath borne seven;
And she that hath many children languisheth.
6 The Lord killeth, and maketh alive:
He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
7 The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:
He bringeth low, He also lifteth up.
8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,
To make them sit with princes,
And inherit the throne of glory:
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
And He hath set the world upon them.
9 He will keep the feet of His holy ones,
But the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness;
For by strength shall no man prevail.
10 They that strive with the Lord shall be broken to pieces;
Against them shall He thunder in heaven:
The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth;
And He shall give strength unto His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.

THE SONG OF HANNAH.

1 Sam. ii. 1–10.

THIS Song of Hannah is the Old Testament *Magnificat*, or high song of sacred praise. No doubt it is called a prayer, for it begins 'And Hannah prayed and said.' Singularly enough, however, there is not a single prayer, in the sense of petition, in the whole course of the song. The word here used for prayer[1] need not necessarily involve direct supplication. It would apply to any devout utterance or meditation in the spirit of worship before the Lord. It may be ascription, thanksgiving, joy in God, or other ebullition of holy thought and feeling. Here we have just such an outburst of exultant delight in God, with every suitable expression of hope, and confidence, and triumph in Him.

But besides this graciously spiritual temper, there is in this Magnificat a true prophetic element as well, connecting itself with Hannah's own experience. Prophecy, in its most general idea, is a divinely vouchsafed insight into the meaning and aims of God's *moral* administration, as science is, by means of investigation, an insight into the processes and ramifications of *natural* law. The

[1] *Tephillah*. It occurs five times in the superscriptions of the Psalms – in the title of the very oldest, the ninetieth, and of one of the latest, the hundred and second, as well as at the close of the seventy-second. 'The prayers (the devotions) of David, the Son of Jesse, are ended.'

fall of an apple led Newton to apprehend the great principles of gravitation, and their universal sway.

> 'The very law which moulds a tear,
> And bids it trickle from its source—
> That law preserves the earth a sphere,
> And guides the planets in their course.'

In the birth of a child and the circumstances accompanying it, Hannah descries the main idea of salvation, and exultantly seizes on its hope. From a personal and seemingly insignificant incident in her own life, she rises to one of the universal principles in the divine government, and shows its working within the economy of divine redemption. It is she who, in the very last word of her song, is the first to name the coming deliverer by His title 'Messiah,' or Jehovah's anointed; it is she who first hails Him as the 'King'; and out of the environments of her own particular case, it is she who rises up to and enunciates the far-reaching assurance:—

> 'Jehovah shall give strength unto His King
> And exalt the horn of His Messiah.'

The song begins with a temporal mercy vouchsafed to herself in answer to earnest, humble, and importunate prayer. A devout and pious woman of sorrowful spirit, she had been still further depressed by the sneers and taunts of a proud unfeeling rival, continually reminding her of her childless condition, and of being therefore no 'mother in Israel.' This was to Hannah's mind a cause of no small anxiety and alarm. For her childlessness was not merely a trial to her maternal instincts, and did not merely subject her to the adversary's reproach, but, what was harder to bear, it seemed to cast doubt on her enjoying the divine favour at all, or at least in any marked degree. This was what filled her with fear and grief. The maternal instinct among the women of Israel

was elevated and sublimated by the idea that any mother might furnish a contributing link in the chain that was to reach to the nation's goal.

Debarred from such a succession, how could one like Hannah be assured of her divine acceptance? Deprived of such a blessing, was she not deprived of one chief *outward* evidence of God's gracious favour and regard? It was this that filled her with doubt and despondency from time to time; and it was despair of human help and resource that drove her back upon her God, who had ever been the help and hope of His people; and this it was that sent her to Shiloh as a humble and meek but earnest suppliant before God. And now that her prayer had been heard, and her son been born and weaned, we find her back again at Shiloh with him. 'And she brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore I also have returned him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he is granted to the LORD.' Out of no self-gratifying spirit, nor desire for personal profit and distinction, had she sought a child at the hand of the Lord. This she made abundantly plain by her willingness to forego a mother's pride in having her boy about her, and by surrendering her claim to keep him as an object of doting fondness and maternal satisfaction. Her great concern was to have some tangible evidence, patent and unmistakable to herself and others, that the Lord had regarded the low estate of His handmaid and visited her with a token of mercy.

And it is her 'salvation' or deliverance from what seemed a state of disfavour with God and man that now prompts this outburst of grateful and believing song. Of

believing as well as of grateful song, because she is enabled at once to rise from this single case of what she terms her 'salvation,' to the principles which regulate the highest salvation of all. The humble episode in her own lowly lot she links to the grandest redemptive issues, just as the history of a single pebble by the sea-shore may be associated with the laws that affect the mightiest orbs which roll in space. She sees in the exaltation of her own lowliness the process of all saving grace; and in her own deliverance she can see a picture and pledge of its fullest realisation and perfect consummation at last.

In this point of view it may be well to connect it with the song of Mary, the New Testament *Magnificat* (Luke i. 46–55), which repeats its strain and re-echoes its sentiments in almost its very words, on a kindred though a much more memorable and exalted occasion. For besides opening with a similar tone of holy exultation—

> 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,
> And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,'

it also sings the praises of Him whose delight it is to abase the proud and exalt the humble:—

> 'He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
> He hath put princes down from their thrones,
> And hath exalted them of low degree.'

while the hope and yearning prophecy of the earlier Magnificat becomes the happy fulfilment and triumphant realisation of the later one—

> 'That He might remember mercy
> Toward Abraham and his seed for ever,
> As He spake unto our fathers.'

The whole structure, spirit and object of both the Magnificats are strictly parallel. They have the same theme and key-note; the same threefold division; the same

great end and aim. Hannah's song, after an *introduction* referring to its reason and occasion (verse 1), divides itself into the three parts, glorifying—

(1) God's revealed *character*, verses 2 and 3. (2) God's revealed *way*, verses 4–8. (3) God's now revealed *ends and aims*, verses 9 and 10.

As to God's character, no one is comparable to Him for holy and faithful integrity: proud boasters, therefore, had need to be very humble and silent before one who knows how to estimate vaunting arrogance, and how to weigh real worth. As to God's procedure, it is His way to humble the haughty and exalt the lowly, as all life's experience and Hannah's own case could amply attest. As to His purpose, He will bring this law into fuller and fuller operation, and by it at last He shall hasten the coming of the Anointed.

INTRODUCTION.

1 My heart exulteth in the LORD,
Mine horn is exalted in the LORD:
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.

The spirit here is that of rejoicing in God. It is a purely religious or spiritual joy, as distinct from mere ebullition of animal spirits or delight in objects of outward sense. No doubt the joy sprang up out of happy circumstances which were the occasion of it, but which were neither its cause nor its object. The alone adequate cause and support of Hannah's joy was God Himself, in His own nature and character, as these had revealed themselves in her own personal experience of His ways. She had long been silently and in secret nourishing a lofty faith and hope 'in Him' as the all-sufficient helper and deliverer of those that truly

trust Him. And now that her faith and hope had been verified, her grateful and admiring love breaks forth in holy joy. Now that she had experienced deliverance from painful depression and indignity, her full heart overflows in sanctified delight. God Himself was a bright thought to her; the very name of God was a source of indescribable gladness. 'When I think of God,' said Haydn, the composer, on being asked why the style of his music was so bright and cheerful, 'my soul is so full of joy that the notes come leaping and dancing from my pen.' And if Hannah's heart were lifted up in kindred exultation, it was not the exultation of haughty disdain, but the meek and tender spirit of exultancy 'in the LORD.'

The metaphor she uses is a simple but expressive one. 'Mine *horn* is exalted in the LORD.' Various purposes were served by the 'horn.' It was used as a trumpet or wind-instrument, as a vessel for holding liquids or unguents, like the horn of ointment or the paint-horn, or as a nail or peg on which clothes might be hung. There may be a possible reference to what was at least its later use, as a portion of ornamental head-dress, which was significantly worn low and depressed in token of grief, and then erect again in token of joy. But used as a metaphor, the horn, however it may have its origin, was the recognised emblem of strength, authority, dignity or honour. To exalt the horn was to secure or accord a position of respect; and to this Hannah had now attained by the help of the Lord, in the very presence of her foes. She could lift up her head without fear or discredit, just as 'her mouth was enlarged,' or she was permitted to open it, without the former affronting taunts of her enemies whenever she spoke. Now she can speak freely, without dread of

being struck dumb or having her lips closed with the sneering reproaches of an adversary.

The contrast that is implied in every one of the four lines is noticeable :—

'My heart exulteth in the LORD:' formerly it was burdened with grief.

'My horn is exalted in the LORD:' formerly it was depressed and downcast.

'My mouth is opened before mine enemies:' formerly it was barred and closed through their ever ready sneers.

'I rejoice in Thy salvation:' formerly it was a sorrowing prayer, whereas now it is a joyful song.

Such a comforting change in her lowly lot; such a salvation and deliverance from a despised and painful state; such a peculiar token of the divine condescension and regard, awakens in her not only grateful thoughts, but very lofty conceptions of the divine character, ways, and purposes, and affords her new assurance of God's ultimate gracious design on a yet larger scale of salvation.

PART I.

HANNAH EXULTS IN GOD'S 'CHARACTER,' AS NOW REVEALED TO HER.

2 There is none holy as the LORD;
For there is none beside Thee:
Neither is there any rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly;
Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth:
For the LORD is a God of knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed.

Wonderful as are God's purposes, wonderful as are His works and ways, most wonderful of all by far is He Himself in His own nature and perfections. This therefore is put here in the foreground, there being a suitable and orderly progression of thought throughout the song. God Himself in His very existence and

character is the primary foundation of unbounded delight and exultation, the true bulwark against the inroads of despondency and gloomy despair. He, the alone self-existent, the holy or all-perfect in Himself, is the one grand guarantee of final order, beauty, and right; the one incomparable object therefore of confidence, because He is the Rock, the emblem of unfailing strength and unchanging fidelity. 'Neither is there any rock like our God'—this is an old quotation from Moses' Deuteronomic song. As a traditional doctrine or saying, often repeated, Hannah had heard of it with the hearing of the ear; but now she herself knew it in her own happy personal intuition and experience—and *there* lay the comfort. Pride, arrogance, and assumption were put to rout now; their cruel spell over, her spirit was thoroughly broken; they had no place of favour and honour, but indeed the very contrary, in the presence of the all-seeing and true-judging Governor of men; a God of knowledge (or rather of knowledges, for the word is an intensive plural, to indicate complete and perfect accuracy of knowledge), who cannot be deceived by appearances, nor silenced by insolence, but who weighs actions in a balance and determines their proper nature and quality.

PART II.

HANNAH EXULTS IN GOD'S 'WAY OF WORKING,' AS NOW MANIFESTED TO HER.

4 The bows of the mighty men are broken,
And they that stumbled are girded with strength.
5 They that were full have hired out themselves for bread;
And they that were hungry have ceased:
Yea, the barren hath borne seven;
And she that hath many children languisheth.

6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive:
He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich:
He bringeth low, He also lifteth up.
8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,
To make them sit with princes,
And inherit the throne of glory:
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
And He hath set the world upon them.

Thus Hannah exults in God's way of lifting up the lowly and giving grace to the humble. For this is the principle which she had seen exemplified in her own case; and notwithstanding the disorder and irregularity that may seem to obtain to such a confusing and baffling extent, it yet holds good, as an ultimate law of the divine administration, that 'God resisteth the proud, but sheweth grace and favour to the humble.'

'The lowly spirit God hath consecrated
As His abiding rest:
And angels by some patriarch's humble tent have waited,
When kings had no such guest.'

In seven different ways, and in the vicissitudes of seven different walks of life — in the chances and vicissitudes of war, travel, business, home, health, wealth, and social position—does Hannah proceed to exemplify and illustrate this fundamental law with increasing emphasis. She sees it in the vicissitudes of *war*, when 'the bows of the mighty are broken,' or, in other words, the battle is not always to the strong, and God does not always grant success to the great battalions, but, in spite of overwhelming odds in force and numbers, the superior power sustains discomfiture and defeat. So in *travel*, the race is not always to the swift; the hare is sometimes beaten in the end by the tortoise, and

'they that stumbled are girded with new strength.' In matters of *business*, 'they that were full have had to hire themselves out for bread, while those who were hungry now take their ease.' In *home and family* life we see the same fluctuations: 'the barren hath borne seven' (a full and complete household, Ruth iv. 15), while 'she that had many children languisheth,' as one by one they have pined away and died, and the domestic hearth becomes desolate. Then follow the ups and downs in three of the main departments of our human lot: *sickness and health*, verse 6, with the strange casualties whereby the strongest are smitten down in the full flush of health, and others, who have been given over to death as beyond the skill of man to help, have been brought again from the jaws of the grave: *riches and poverty*, verse 7, with all their strange and unaccountable vicissitudes; and the kindred fluctuations in *rank and social status*, verse 8, where the poor out of the dust and the needy from the dunghill have been raised to seats of honour and office and knowledge. 'For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and He hath set the world upon them.' The word for 'pillars' is an obscure and difficult one, occurring only elsewhere in chap. xiv. 4; but the idea seems to be that, as an Oriental house is supported by its great pillars or corner-posts, the whole fabric of human affairs is upheld by divinely planted and ordained fixtures, which God alone has instituted; and that these constituted arrangements in the great social structure of human life are not merely natural laws, but 'ordinances of heaven,' from which there is no escape.

PART III.

HANNAH EXULTS IN GOD'S 'PURPOSED ENDS AND DESIGNS.'

9 He will keep the feet of His holy ones,
But the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness;
For by strength shall no man prevail.
10 They that strive with the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
Against them shall He thunder in heaven:
The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth;
And He shall give strength unto His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.

The song now becomes prophetic. Hannah anticipates the realisation of her own experience over the wider field of the world's history. The same principle she had herself seen and felt in her own life will operate more and more unto the perfect day of fullest triumph and victory. By it the Lord will guard the interests of His holy ones; the wicked will be hushed by it into darkness and obscurity; for by mere strength or violence shall no man finally prevail. 'Jehovah! they shall be broken pieces, whosoever they be, who contend with Him.' He shall put down all rule and authority and power that may be adverse to this grand principle of His own kingdom. By it the Lord shall try and test the ends of the earth; and the benediction that descends on the lowly will descend with divinest fulness on the head of the great King and Messiah, the meek and humble Servant of the Most High, whose horn shall be exalted through it, as Hannah's own had been already on a smaller scale. In Him and His kingdom shall be seen the perfect exemplar and supreme instance of the exaltation of the lowly; and thus at length would be secured the triumphant establishment and the happy prevalence of this great and benign idea, with all its

saving and salutary fruits: 'He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

'And truth and justice then
Will down return to men:
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen:
And Heaven as at some festival
Will open wide the gates of her high Palace Hall.'

DAVID'S EVEN-SONG.

David's Even-song.

1 Now these be the last words of David.
David the son of Jesse saith,
And the man who was raised on high saith,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:
2 The spirit of the Lord spake by me,
And His word was upon my tongue.
3 The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spake to me:
(There shall be) One that ruleth over men righteously,
That ruleth in the fear of God,
4 (He shall be) as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
A morning without clouds;
(When) the tender grass (springeth) out of the earth,
Through clear shining after rain.
5 Verily my house is not so with God;
Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things, and sure:
For it is all my salvation, and all (my) desire,
Although He maketh it not to grow.
6 But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away,
For they cannot be taken with the hand:
7 But the man that toucheth them
Must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear;
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in (their) place.

DAVID'S EVEN-SONG.

2 Sam. xxiii. 1–7.

INTRODUCTION.

1 Now these be the last words of David.
David the son of Jesse saith,
And the man who was raised up on high saith,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:
2 The spirit of the LORD spake by me,
And His word was upon my tongue.
3 The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spake to me.

THESE be the last words of David—not indeed his last words uttered in dying, but his last oracular utterance in the spirit and power of prophecy; his last solemn and sacred composition; the closing legacy of his lyrical efforts. It is his Even-song; his farewell creed and confession; his dying testimony respecting his Messianic hopes, and the coming and kingdom of his own great Son and Lord.

David is now drawing nigh the close of his own grand yet chequered career as King of Israel. He is conscious enough of his defects and shortcomings, when compared with what he thought a king and kingly rule should be. He is painfully aware of having failed to come up to his own ideal of a theocratic sovereign; but he has cherished in his soul's high communings the perfect image he has

failed to reach: and he is assured of a Coming King and Kingdom connected with his own house and line, when that grand ideal should at last be completely realised. With all his sins and crimes—and they were many—he is conscious of never having like Saul swerved fatally from the theocratic principle, at least on its theocratic side, however much and often he had violated many of its practical requirements, and failed to preserve always its noble standard. Yet he is not insensible that the monarchy in his hands and keeping should be the mould according to which a higher and purer form should be developed; and that his own kingly rule might not unaptly shadow forth and 'give assurance of' a perfect realisation of his own divinely-taught and deeply-cherished ideal. Very interesting it is to find that these great thoughts were filling the horizon of David's mind in his closing days. They were fit for a king to live on and for a king to die on. What first strikes us in the introduction of this song, is the high and solemn air it wears; having a double form, as is not unusual with the more sacred and important of the divine oracles. The first four lines exhibit David's peculiar qualifications for being the vehicle of such an announcement, and the second four emphasize the value of the song and 'the reasons for it.' But whether we look to the human channel or to the divine source of it, we are made to feel the supreme excellence and transcendent value of the communication now to be made. 'David the son of Jesse saith: even the man who was raised on high: the anointed of the God of Jacob and the sweet Psalmist of Israel'—such an accumulation of titles, together with the use of the peculiar word 'saith,' which is the one reserved as a solemn formula for high occasions like a 'Thus *saith* the LORD,' should convey the assurance

that what we are to hear will be of no ordinary importance, and will be clothed in striking and memorable words by

> 'Him who sang
> The Songs of the Supreme: himself supreme
> Among his tuneful brethren.'

We are made to feel this the more strongly, by the second half of the strophe which speaks to us of the real source and origin of the oracle, bearing on its front, as it does, a fourfold mark or stamp of its divine authority. 'The *Spirit* of the LORD spake by me'; it is therefore a pure and direct *inspiration* from above: 'And his *word* was upon my tongue'; it is a true and accurate *record* of the oracle: 'The God of Israel said'; so high is its *authority* and import: 'The Rock of Israel spake to me'; so *sure and immovable* is its realisation and fulfilment.

As to the subject and meaning of the oracle itself, there are four main parts:—

I. The ideal *King* is described, verse 3.

II. The ideal *blessings* of his rule, verse 4.

III. The ideal *relation* thereto of David and his dynasty, verse 5.

IV. The ideal *results* or *issues* of that sway, verses 6 and 7.

I. THE IDEAL KING.

> 'One that ruleth over men righteously,
> That ruleth in the fear of God.'

There is both a principle and a prophecy involved in these words.

A principle: for they indicate that he who would really *rule* over men, and not merely trample upon them, *must rule righteously* so as to command their allegiance; and he must do obeisance himself to a higher Power, ruling in the fear of God, so as to inspire his subjects

with a similar reverence. This is the only guarantee of stability to a throne, and the only way of access to the conscientious and intelligent loyalty of a people.

But the words embody no less a *prophecy*: intimating in no obscure way that, whatever failures or successes there be among rulers, there will yet arise a true and perfect exemplar who shall bear sway not over one single tribe or nation, but over men at large; fulfilling all righteousness for men, in men and by men, inspiring them everywhere with the true fear of the Lord. This idea, this proper meaning of the couplet, is conveyed to us in the marginal rendering:—

> 'There shall be One that ruleth over men, a righteous One,
> That ruleth in the fear of God.'

Every true shepherd of the people and king among men is a type and herald of this coming One, and a preparer of the way for Him 'whose *right* it is thus to rule,' the best, and highest, and the alone antitype of them all.

II. The ideal blessings of His sway.

> 'As the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
> A morning without clouds:
> (When) the tender grass (springeth) out of the earth
> Through the clear shining after rain.'

What an exquisite and suggestive picture, in miniature form, of the Messiah's reign wherever it is owned and obeyed! For that it is the Messianic hope which here gleams forth might be easily evinced from various considerations; among them the fact that a good manuscript authority inserts 'Jehovah' in the first line; thus—'As the morning light shall Jehovah the Sun arise.' And indeed both the emblems, sunshine and rain, are constant and characteristic symbols of Messiah's sway in the word of prophecy. In the image of the morning light or rising

sun, we have a vivid presentation of the illumining and gladdening power of Christ's kingdom, opening the portals of a new day, and darting forth gladsome and surprising beams from heaven, scattering the darkness of sin and superstition, irradiating the gloom of night with joy unspeakable and full of glory, making fresh disclosures to man of beauty and truth, arousing the slumbering powers of human intelligence, imparting new life and activity to our spiritual nature, and stirring into zeal and energy the dormant but now quickened activities of our higher being.

The other image—the tender grass sprouting forth and glistening with young freshness after rain—speaks of the happy growth and rich profusion of spiritual graces wherever the Lord, the Spirit, descends in fructifying showers on our barren nature. Like the mantle of living green that clothes as with a magic dress, the barest and most withered spots, and throws over them the beauty of an oasis after rain in the desert, the loveliness of the new life and character springs forth before the astonished gaze. All heaven descends on the renewed soul—the understanding reflects heaven's clearness; the heart reflects heaven's purity, the will its loftiness, the conscience its tenderness, and the whole being its bright yet calm serenity. Over the wider face of communities and nations, there comes stealing gently but not less impressively a similar change from barrenness to living beauty. Ignorance yields to intelligence, apathy to noble concern, and all the baser propensities give way to the higher and richer instincts. Benevolence triumphs over the malignant passions of our nature : a new spirit of love, life and liberty, supplants and exorcises the demons of hate, bloodshed and violence ; slowly yet steadily the better being bears sway and triumphs over the old and

worse nature; 'the wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert rejoices and blossoms like the rose.'

III. The ideal relation thereto of David and his dynasty.

'Verily my house is not so with God:
Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things, and sure:
For it is all my salvation, and all (my) desire,
Although He maketh it not to grow.'

This is the section which more immediately describes David's personal professions and dying experiences. The first part of it has usually been understood to convey a painful and sorrowful reflection—that his household and family had been very far from realising in their history the beautiful emblems of the morning sun and tender green grass—but that he consoles himself with the thought of God's everlasting covenant, which he takes as the ground of his own personal safety and support, all his salvation and all his desire, amid the sad disappointment of his hopes and wishes respecting his children.

Such a rendering, however, besides making David express what seems a cold-hearted and selfish style of sentiment, as if he were idly bewailing the misconduct of his family, yet congratulating himself on being happily indifferent to it, has other serious objections, even though it is retained by the revised version, and the better rendering is placed only in the margin. It makes the first word in each of the four clauses mean a different thing, although it is the very same word in the original, translating it by *verily*, *yet*, *for*, and *although*, with arbitrary and improbable diversity; making also the word 'house' mean 'household,' instead of a house in the

sense of a dynasty or royal line. We prefer therefore the margin, with its uniformly rendered 'for' in each place.

> 'For is not my house so with God?
> For He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
> Ordered in all things, and sure,
> For this is all my salvation and all my desire.
> For will not He make it to grow?'

In any case, David is sustained and cheered by a *happy faith as to the part*,—'He hath made with me a covenant, ordered in all things and sure:' *by a joyous experience as to the present*—'this is all my salvation and all my desire:' and by *an assured hope as to the future*—'for will He not make it to grow?' He rests on and cleaves to the covenant which had been again and again renewed and certified to him with growing clearness. The terms and contents of this covenant are set forth in various Psalms of his, such as Psalm cxxxii. 11, 12, 'The LORD hath sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne'; or Psalm lxxxix. 28, 'My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.'

This is the grand covenant of redemption, respecting a kingdom, only revealed partially at first, but growing in fulness and distinctness as the ages continued to roll. They were not different covenants, by which Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, or David were made strong unto salvation; only different aspects or stages of the same covenant, just as they are not different suns at dawn, or at midway up the slope of heaven, or at noon. It is the same sun, only at different stages in its progress.

What gave stability, repose, and steady comfort to

David, was his sense of the changeless unity of that covenant which is said to be 'everlasting,' as having in it no variable quality: 'ordered in all things,' with nothing left to haphazard and admitting of no afterthought; and 'sure,' because unfailing, and without possibility of any wreckage or collapse. Hence, his ever hopeful return to it, and his quiet assurance from it. 'For will He not make it grow?' There may seem to be appearances to the contrary from time to time, but these are only appearances and they only *seem* so, even at the worst. No wonder then he adds 'This is all my salvation and all my desire.'

> 'My God, the covenant of Thy love
> Abides for ever sure:
> And in its matchless grace I find
> My happiness secure.'

IV. The ideal results and issues of this covenant sway.

This is set forth more especially on its *destructive* side, in the last strophe. For the beneficial administration of any well-ordered government must have its awe-inspiring and punitive aspects. In proportion as good is loved, must evil be hated; or as right and order are upheld, must wrong and anarchy be repressed. Hence the terrible 'But' of verse 6, introducing the obverse and threatening aspect of Messiah's rule.

6 But the ungodly (lawless men or children of Belial)
shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away,
For they cannot be taken with the hand.
7 But the man that toucheth them
Must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear.
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.

Burned *on the spot* with fire must be the doom of mere thorns and thistles, which only cumber the ground and resist all powers of cultivation. The law and aim of righteous rule is ever this:—'The Lord approveth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' The wicked are here likened to impenetrable thickets of intertangled thorns, that give way only to the long-shafted bill-hook, or the application of fire on the spot. For 'the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.'

But returning to David personally again, ere we close, we see in this sacred even-song which had been his stay in trouble and now is his hope in death, 'the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.' This had been his one alone and adequate support, 'all his salvation and all his desire.'

> 'The covenant in the darkest gloom
> Still heavenly rays impart:
> And when the eyelids close in death,
> Will cheer the fainting heart.'

And so it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. David stands by the covenant and builds on it what he feels to be the surest of his hopes. And now, with this golden glory opening before him, it is already all morning with him, 'a morning without clouds.'

> 'He sets, as sets the *morning* star,
> Which goes not down behind the darkened west;
> Nor hides obscured amid the tempests of the sky,
> But melts away into the light of heaven.'

THE SECULAR SONGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I. Song of the Sword.
II. Song of the Well.
III. Song of the War-Flame.
IV. Song of the Bow.

And Lamech said unto his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Wives of Lamech listen to my utterance:
I slay a man for wounding me,
A young man for bruising me:
If Cain's vengeance is sevenfold,
Truly Lamech's seventy and seven.

SONG OF THE SWORD.

Gen. iv. 23, 24.

THIS address of Lamech to his wives is the oldest snatch of Hebrew verse. Indeed it is Hebrew only in the sense of being reproduced in this language from an original antediluvian tongue, and stamped with the rhythm, assonance, and parallelism of Hebrew poetic diction[1]. As may be supposed, the interpretation of so brief and obscure a fragment opens the door to much varied conjecture; although it is generally, and no doubt rightly, considered to shed a lurid light on the narrative in which it occurs, and to condense for us in briefest form the spirit of Lamech and his time. That time was a lawless and godless age, the forerunner of the latest age of all before the flood. It was the epoch alike of Lamech and of Enoch, each the 'seventh from Adam' by the two different but now commingling lines of Cain and Seth. And it has been suggested, not without plausibility, that this effusion of Lamech's may have some relation to Enoch's solemn and warning prophecy, as given in the Epistle of Jude (vv. 14, 15), with its high poetic and parallelistic style, and with its echoing catch-word 'the ungodly' rung in upon our ears with all the force of poetic iteration.

[1] In the original, the first four lines close with the same marked letter, a form of alliteration or assonance that is manifestly an element of beauty.

'Behold, the Lord cometh with His holy myriads,
To execute judgment upon all,
And to convict all the ungodly
Of all their works of ungodliness
Which they have ungodly wrought:
And of all the hard speeches
Which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'

What if this song of Lamech be one of those speeches —those 'hard speeches' of ungodly sinners—which Enoch mentions[1]? Enoch and Lamech seem at least to be the antitheses of each other at the close of the first septenniad in human history, representing the two streams of patriarchal life, which begin to mingle in their time like the blue Rhone and the muddy Arve, and exemplifying in their own persons the two conflicting tendencies which may be regarded as the key of human history, and of which this world has ever been the scene. In Enoch we have the culmination of that simple, orderly, God-fearing life which obtained among the descendants of Seth, and of which we have a record in the expressive words, 'then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.' In Lamech, on the other hand, we have the culmination of those other and opposite tendencies which prevailed among the descendants of Cain, and of which we have these results recorded: 'the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.'

[1] Regarding the question, *where* Jude got this prophecy of Enoch, two answers are eligible: either he may have quoted some current traditional form, or extracted it from the 'Book of Enoch,' which then existed, and from which a few expressions have been elsewhere preserved, but which, having disappeared for centuries, was rediscovered in *Æthiopic* among the Abyssinians in 1821. This so-called 'Book of Enoch' was never accepted nor attempted to be passed as any part of Canonical Scripture. Evidently composed at different dates, most of it written a century or more before Christ, and incorporating a variety of traditional matter of more or less interest but of little authority, the book consists of five parts, closing with Enoch's admonitions to his own family and to men at large. Then follow several appendices, the last of them being Enoch's views of judgment and future retribution. Not impossibly a copy of this or some similar Book of Enoch may yet be found in an earlier form and language.

In Lamech's own person and household we seem to have a perfect representation in miniature of these two classes of evil—corruption and violence. His home is the seat of the one: his song is the evidence of the other.

Lamech, the first polygamist on record, the first notorious violator of primitive marriage law and family constitution, goes early in the 'way of Cain,' and becomes, by his own confession, in intent, if not also in fact, a homicide. Polygamy seems never far from bloodshed. Sin cannot live single. It mates with misery, and both breed their like again, in aggravated form. A breach of the Seventh Commandment is twin-brother with a breach of the Sixth. They are children that go hand in hand. He who speaks to his 'wives' is he who speaks, or rather *sings*, familiarly of 'slaying a man.'

It has been suggested also that there is something painfully significant in the very names of his wives and daughter—the only female names, besides that of Eve, that have come to us from beyond the flood. Adah means the beauty or ornament, and Zillah the cool shade, while Naamah is a word suggestive of delight and pleasure. We do not need to lay undue stress on this, in order to understand from other things that Lamech's was a gifted but wicked family, abounding in worldly wealth and luxury; a proud and lawless race, full of inventive genius, and advanced in all the arts of a civilised yet boastful and self-corrupting life. Adah's two sons, Jabal (increase) and Jubal (melody), are represented, the one as a great and successful breeder of stock, at the very head of his nomadic profession, and the other the inventor of musical instruments. 'When Jabal set them in a way to be rich, Jubal set them in a way to be merry[1].' Not unlikely the work of Tubal-

[1] Matthew Henry.

Cain, Zillah's son, the prime and cunning 'artificer of every cutting instrument in brass and iron,' may have suggested to Jubal's finer ear,

> 'To iterate the beating hammer's sound
> In milder tones and with a sweeter note.'

And so, starting from 'sonorous metal breathing martial sounds,' he may have been led from the clang of percussion instruments to the softer melody of stringed and wind instruments, like the harp and organ, as the poet's fancy sings:—

> 'It chanced that passing by a pond he found
> An open tortoise lying on the ground,
> Within the which there nothing else remained
> Save the dry sinews, on the shell, stiff-strained.
> This empty house Jubal doth gladly bear,
> Strikes on those strings and lends attentive ear:
> And by this mould frames the melodious lute
> That makes woods hearken and the winds be mute.'

If in Jubal we are to recognise the father of music, and in Tubal-Cain the father of weapons of war, in Lamech we have to recognise the father of poetry, and in his daughter, Naamah, according to the Rabbins, the mistress of woolspinning and the dance. Truly a gifted, energetic and inventive, but withal a self-seeking and self-indulgent family!

As regards the snatch of Lamech's song itself, the main difficulty is to determine whether it is to be interpreted as a *lamentation*, a *defence*, or a *menace*. Are we to render it, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, a young man to my hurt,' and so make Lamech express himself as a homicide stung by remorse or fear, deploring his rash act and dreading its consequences? This would be to exhibit the song as a *lament*, and the last two lines as a kind of refuge for Lamech, and a con-

solation to his wives. It is difficult, however, to see how the words apply in such a sense: while the expressions, 'my wounding' and 'my hurt,' are to be properly taken in their objective sense 'for wounding me' and 'for hurting me.' Confessedly the song does not *sound* like a penitent or remorseful lamentation, while the last couplet seems to breathe nothing but vengeance, and glories only in Lamech's own personal immunity:—

> 'If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
> Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.'

It seems impossible to reconcile such a vaunt with anything of the spirit of fear or tender regret.

Are we then to render it, 'Have I slain a man for merely wounding me? a young man for only hurting me?' and so make Lamech excuse himself for some homicide he had committed in self-defence, or at least without murderous purpose or revenge. This would be to regard the song as a *defence*: Lamech justifying and vindicating himself on the ground that it was an accident—at least, by no intentional, or wilful, or wanton bloodshed that he had taken the life of another; it was because of a dangerous and unprovoked assault upon himself. And so he soothes the fears of his wives by the consideration that if Cain, a deliberate murderer, were protected by a sevenfold vengeance, Lamech, who slew a fellow creature unwittingly, may look for a seventy and sevenfold shield of defence. Against this view, however, it is sufficient to urge that Cain's protected and charmed life was to be no blessing but only a more protracted curse; which could hardly be a satisfactory consideration to either Lamech or his wives.

No; the whole tone and temper of the song is that of *menace*: the chant of a fierce, defiant, and lawless spirit, boasting of security, and exciting itself thereby in

recklessness and violence. It matters little what particular turn we may give to the principal sentence in the song. We may construe it as a past tense, a future, or (perhaps best of all, because most inclusive in its significance) an emphatic and energetic present. But whichever course we adopt—whether we treat it as a statement of fact which some prefer, 'I *have slain* a man for wounding me,' or as a threat like others, 'I *will slay* a man if he wound me,' or as a fixed and threatening resolve according to others, 'I *slay* a man for wounding me,' that is if he wound me—all these possible and admissible renderings suit equally well the idea of a menace being conveyed in the words, and reiterated in the proud boast of the final couplet, 'if Cain be avenged sevenfold, Lamech will assuredly be seventy and sevenfold.' The song is evidently meant to be an echo of the strife and violence accompanying the overthrow of primitive marriage law, and the consequent corruption of family and social life. A daring and defiant air breathes through it from first to last. Not terror, but vengeance; not apology, but threatening; not defence, but defiance, is its spirit. In Cain's immunity from vengeance at the hand of his fellows, Lamech finds encouragement for his own perverse and violent courses. The song is that of one who seems conscious of wrong-doing, but none the less resolute and persistent in its continued perpetration. It breathes forth threatening and slaughter against all assailants: rejoicing in summary vengeance already done, and boasting of immunity from murderous retaliation, as if Lamech felt safer against attack than Cain himself, and possessed far greater securities and advantages than ever he with all his charmed and curse-protected life. But while this is the spirit of the song, it seems impossible to get beyond the region of bare

conjecture as to what might have been the immediate occasion or prompting inspiration of it. A recent writer has called it 'The Song of the Sword,' and has suggested that it was an exultant boast and menace called forth by Lamech's savage delight at finding himself and his family possessed of the new and effective weapons devised by his son Tubal-Cain, 'the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron.' The name Lamech has been derived from a primitive or Arabic root, signifying 'to snatch or seize.' And, as Lamech seized the new-made weapon and swung it about his head, realising the advantages of the hard metal and its sharp edge-tools, he felt the impulse of a savage joy, and poured his soul into this fierce lay, expressive of both the license and the immunity that should arise from such awful weapons alike of offence and defence. In that case the point of contrast would lie between Cain, the mere club-bearing man, and himself, the wielder of mightier implements. If Cain went forth under the security of a sevenfold avengement, what less than a seventy and sevenfold avengement must wait on him, who should go forth secure with shield and spear, to face all comers?

Dire and dreadful as had been the blow of the first fratricide, it should be as nothing compared with the havoc to be wrought by iron weapons, all through the coming ages. Oh! melancholy: to think that men could not invent ploughshares without also inventing swords! nor learn the value of pruning-hooks without indulging in the use of spears! In this 'Song of the Sword,' or whatever else it may be called, with its fierce and cruel vengeance, its defiant tone, and its proud malicious temper, have we not the key-note of all the 'Titanic arrogance' of rapacious tyranny, and all the revengeful

destructive passions that have ever since desolated the earth and carried fire, rapine, and bloodshed in the train of the implements of war? Here we have first expressed in words,—

'The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power:
And they should keep who can!'

And this is the first recorded and earliest of human songs! Happily it has had others very different in its wake. For if this first song of the Old Testament be one of violence and menace, of selfish boastfulness and pride, it is cheering to reflect that the first song of the New Testament, on the other hand, is the Angel-song of peace and goodwill.

'Nor war nor battle's sound
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng.
And kings sat still with awe-ful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.'

'And the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this.'

'And lo! the days are hastening on by prophet bards foretold:
When with the ever-circling year comes round the age of gold:
When peace shall over all the earth her ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the Angels sing.'

II. SONG OF THE WELL.

Then sang Israel this song:

Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it,
The well, which the princes digged,
Which the nobles of the people delved
With the sceptre, (and) with their staves.

SONG OF THE WELL.

Numbers xxi. 17, 18.

WELLS of water play an important part in Bible story. Some of the most touching and most tender scenes are associated with them. Many an incident of joy and grief occurred around the well-mouth, and many an exquisite idyl of patriarchal life from Abraham's days and onward has been enacted there.

The earliest mentioned is Beer-lahai-roi, the 'well of Him that liveth, and seeth me,' as Hagar reverently called it. And we read of her again when, being a fugitive for the second time in the wilderness, with her almost dying boy, 'God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.' The principal well, however, connected with Abraham, and one of the most famous, is Beer-sheba, 'the well of the oath,' or, as it may also be rendered, 'the well of seven,' because seven animals, or at least seven pieces, were needed to constitute a perfectly binding covenant. And so said Abraham to Abimelech, 'These seven ewe-lambs thou shalt take of my hand, that they may be witness for me that I have digged this well. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba, because there they sware, both of them. Thus made they a covenant at Beer-sheba[1].'

An additional well of Beer-sheba is connected with Isaac's sojourn there; and both these larger wells, with

[1] Gen. xxi. 30–32.

five smaller ones, remain to this day. Then the singular names of Esek, *contention*, and Sitnah, *hatred* or *spite*, remind us of incidents connected with other wells of Isaac, which the gentle patriarch, in the spirit of forbearance that was natural to him, surrendered under the simple protest embodied in their names rather than quarrel over his rights in them; and he found his reward in the other spot, Rehoboth, *room*, where 'he digged a well, and for that they strove not, and he called it Rehoboth: for now, he said, the Lord hath made *room* for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.'

Then there is 'Jacob's Well,' which has such tender and sacred associations in our Lord's own life of so instructive a kind; and there is the suggestive image of Joseph likened to a 'fruitful bough *by a well*, whose branches and clusters hang over the wall.'

We need not linger over those tender interviews so touchingly recorded between Eliezer of Damascus and Rebecca at the well, or of Jacob and Rachel, or of Moses and the daughters of Jethro in Midian. Nor need we do more than simply mention later instances, like Samson's well of En-hakkore, 'the well of him that prayed,' which, it is said, 'is in Lehi till this day'; or the two connected with David's career, that at *Bahurim*, in which his two messengers were concealed by a cunning stratagem of the woman, whose more than adroit remark, 'They be gone over the water,' turned aside their pursuers. And then when David at Adullam longed and cried, 'Oh, that one would give me to drink of the water of the *well of Bethlehem* which is by the gate'; and when his three mighty champions broke through the enemies' ranks and fetched it, he would not drink it, but, with the piety of a saint and the magnanimity of a patriot-hero, poured it out unto the

Lord, saying, 'Be it far from me; is not this the blood of men who went in jeopardy of their lives?'

Thus do associations, striking and memorable, gather round these Bible wells. They are among the most historic of spots. Nor do we wonder at their importance, when we remember their value in hot and thirsty lands, where water supplies are scanty and uncertain. In the economy of Eastern peoples they were like the medieval monastery or Norman keep among our own forefathers. They became clustering-places for scattered and wandering families to settle down beside,—centres of interest and scenes of conflict, with their stirring incidents and their eventful memories.

But it is perhaps more to our present purpose to note the variety of words possessed by the Hebrews to indicate the different kinds of their water-supply. They had no fewer than seven names for rivers, brooks, or *running* water, besides a number more for canals, reservoirs, and other forms of *standing* water. The word for a stagnant pool, like a marsh or surface pond, was very different from a cistern of pure water cut out of the solid rock, or carefully constructed of skilful masonry. There are especially three words frequently recurring which it may be useful to distinguish, and they are found together, as it happens, in one passage (Proverbs v. 15, 16):—

> 'Drink waters out of thine own *cistern*,
> And running waters out of thine own *well*.
> Let thy *fountains* be dispersed abroad.'

The well (Bēēr) is different from both the cistern (Bor) and the fountain (Ayin). This last is properly the bubbling spring piercing the surface of the ground, the *eye*, as it means, of gushing and sparkling water amid the desert sand. The cistern (Bor) is the mere recep-

tacle for a small and limited supply; and hence the folly of forsaking a living fountain, with its perennial flow, for the scanty store of the cistern, especially a cracked or broken one, which can retain none of the water. The distinctive peculiarity, on the other hand, of the Bēēr, or well, is that it has been *dug*—the word, indeed, being derived from one which signifies 'to dig'—so as to reach down to a hidden spring *under ground*. The digging of the present well marks a change in the situation of the Israelitish camp. It indicated that the people were returning to cultivated territory, and getting out of the sands of the desert. In the wilderness they had depended at first on the natural *ayin* or surface-spring; and then as they rose up into the higher craggy region of Mount Sinai, they had ample supplies out of the smitten rocks at Horeb or at Kadesh-barnea: whereas now in getting into more habitable parts they had to sink wells, properly so called, by skill and labour, 'according to the instruction of the lawgiver, with their staves,' or the little paddles they had used in the neighbourhood of the camp for sanitary purposes. 'And from thence (the border of Moab) they journeyed to *Bēēr*: that is the *well* whereof the LORD said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then sang Israel this song:

> 'Spring up, O Well; sing ye unto it:
> The Well, which the princes digged,
> Which the nobles of the people delved,
> With the sceptre, (and) with their staves.'

This Bēēr was apparently what bore the more specific names afterwards of *Beer-elim, the well of heroes*, and should be distinguished from the earlier *Elim*, or rather Ælim, of Exodus xv. 27, where they had met

with 'twelve *fountains* (not *wells* in the proper sense of dug cavities) of water, and threescore and ten palm trees.' They had now crossed the Arnon, the dividing frontier between the Amorites and Moab—a wild deep gorge, with great precipices and dangerous landslips, well suited for a strong natural line of defence. And Bēēr was their second encampment on old Moabitish territory, which had, however, passed back again into the enterprising hands of Sihon, King of the Amorites. Here the people of Israel dug their first well on the very borders of the promised land, as if to take infeffment of their new inheritance. It was a bright and memorable public occasion; and fitly does this brief but sparkling snatch of lyric minstrelsy celebrate the digging of the well—'the well whereof the LORD said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.' Doubtless the little carol, especially its refrain, 'Spring up, O well,' would be a favourite one with water-drawers afterwards—with maidens toiling at the rope and wheel to bring the bucket up, or with women lingering at the fountain when the spring was feebly running, and the refrain might seem to coax the water to gush more freely: 'Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.'

But the peculiar charm of the song lies, as has been said, 'not only in its antiquity, but in the characteristic touch which so manifestly connects it with the life and times to which the narrative assigns it. The one point which is delightedly dwelt upon is that the leaders took their part in the work.' What is celebrated with such sparkling joy in this little burst of melody is the happy union among all ranks, and the spirit of universal goodwill and co-operation in the work—giving cheerful augury for the future of the tribes in entering on the promised

land, and a lively demonstration of popular confidence in their leaders.

'At God's command,
Dug in the sand,
By princely hand,
Spring up, O well.

The chiefs attend,
Their efforts lend,
Their staves befriend.
Spring up, O well.

Thrice happy sign
When all combine
With power divine.
Spring up, O well.

The weak and strong,
Around it throng
To cheer with song.
Spring up, O well.

A sudden hush;
The waters gush,
You hear the rush.
Spring up, O well.

And this is why
We all may try
To join the cry,
Spring up, O well.'

Some practical lessons are pleasingly suggested by the scene and the song.

1. There is a *personal* lesson, respecting the spirit in which we ought to do our work. When the people were called to bore for water in a novel and unaccustomed fashion, how interesting and inspiriting it is to read, 'Then Israel sang this song'! This lightened their toil and helped to prosper the issue. It is good to note

the connection between cheerfulness and successfulness in effort. We are made for work. 'Labour for one or other end, is Lord and Master of us all.' The very command which enjoins rest, and says, 'Remember the Sabbath day,' says no less of the other six, 'Thou shalt labour.' And how true it is, that

> 'Life without work is unenjoyed,
> The happiest are the best employed'!

Singing promotes work, and work promotes singing. The least happy and the most to be pitied are those who have nothing to do, and yet know not how to do it. We may well sing both *for* our work and *at* it.

> 'For they are bravest, brightest, best,
> Who from the task within their span
> Earn for themselves the right to rest
> With an increase of good to man.'

If 'Eden' means 'delight,' the garden of paradise had not been an 'Eden' apart from the work 'to dress and keep it.' And under no circumstances of loss or pain, of disappointment or blunder, can it improve matters to be doing nothing, but only in bitterness to be

> 'Sitting by the poisoned springs of life,
> Waiting for the morrow which shall free us from the strife.'

There is a promise and a potency of good in all true serviceable work. When 'Israel sang this song,' it was in answer to the promise, 'I will give thee water.' And there is no spot in earth's pilgrimage where work has to be done, which has not lying near it some such word of cheer.

> 'Springs of life in desert places
> Shall thy God unseal for thee:
> Springs of sweet refreshment flowing
> When thy work is hard and long,
> Courage, hope and power bestowing,
> Lighten labour with thy song.'

Thank God, 'He gives us songs in the very night.' Let us remember how our Lord Himself, on the eve of His betrayal, and in full view of the agony and bitter cross, alleviated His sorrows and braced His spirit for the task—'He sang a hymn.' What a lesson for this work-a-day world, when nothing worth doing can be undertaken or overtaken without something being endured or undergone! But 'a cheerful heart doeth good like a medicine;' and

> 'The merry heart goes all the day,
> The sad tires in a mile-a.'

And singing is infectious. *They* sang the song, and they digged the well. So work, and so sing.

> 'Sing as when "the Well of heroes"
> Gushed with clear and full supply,
> And the sound of rising water
> Mingled with the shoutings nigh.'

2. A *social* lesson—the blessings of union and united effort. We are to mark how zealously all ranks joined in the work, and how 'the leaders led in Israel.' 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even *life* for evermore.' Unity is quick with life, and therefore with energy. Union is strength. The harmony now manifested among the tribes, formed a beautiful contrast with the previous distractions; and this is the song of a happy because a united Church and nation. When Israel thus laboured, we hear of no disorder. Murmurings were stilled. High and low were full of heart and full of hope, because full of love. Well might they make the fields of Moab vocal with their song, while far beneath, the secret springs of earth were made to yield their treasured waters to supply a nation's need and quench a nation's thirst.

3. A *philanthropic* lesson—*Dig a well.* This well became a lasting and monumental blessing, celebrated in immortal song. A disciple of Mohammed, it is said, came to the prophet one day and asked, 'What shall I best do as a memorial to my mother who is dead?' to which he replied. '*Dig a well*, and call it by her name, and put upon it, *This well is for my mother.*' Beautiful idea! a monument truly serviceable, and therefore sure to last. Some memories are 'writ in water,' but here a mother's name is blissfully perpetuated in supplying the pure refreshing draught to weary wayfarers. This form of good endures like 'a joy for ever,' trickling down from age to age. 'Dig a well.' Whoso giveth a cup of cold water shall in no wise lose his reward.

4. A *spiritual* lesson. 'Gather the people *to me*; I will give them water.'

'True well of life! of Thee I drink and live,
Who drinketh of Thee ne'er of thirst can die,
'Tis Thine alone the immortal thirst to slake,
Thou spring and flow of immortality.'

The point here emphasized is the connection between promise, preparation and prayer, if we would win the privilege of drawing water with joy from the wells of salvation. First comes the PROMISE, 'I will give them water,' but it is accompanied with the command, 'Gather the people together.' The Lord Himself is the well-spring, but the gathering together at His command is the *region* where the well-spring flows. The people honoured the divine requirement, and God honoured in their experience His own gracious promise. But we mark the PREPARATION made for its fulfilment, and for the people securing the supply. The well had to be digged. Let us note the connection between the fulfilment of God's promise, and Israel's efforts to secure the

blessing. Divine promises, far from precluding human efforts, are the very ground of encouragement on which these may be hopefully put forth. They are the stimulus to its exercise. Promise and requirement; requirement and obedience; dutiful obedience and final fulfilment—such is the chain, and all the links must hold, or they break together and fall asunder. Yet there is one link more. Even promised and prepared-for blessings must be fetched in at last by PRAYER. Earnest, cheerful, believing desire and yearning. 'Spring up, O well.' Is not this the Lord's own suggestion to the woman of Samaria? 'Thou shouldest have *asked* of Me, and I would give thee the living water.' This is the genius of Charles Wesley's hymn:—

> 'Thou of life the fountain art,
> Freely let me take of Thee:
> Spring Thou up within my heart,
> Rise to all eternity.'

III. SONG OF THE WAR-FLAME.

Song of the War-Flame.

27 Come ye to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon be built and established:
28 For a fire is gone out of Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon:
It hath devoured Ar of Moab,
The lords of the high places of Arnon.
29 Woe to thee, Moab!
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh:
He hath given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
Unto Sihon king of the Amorites.
30 We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon,
And we have laid waste even unto Nophah,
Which reacheth unto Medeba.

SONG OF THE WAR-FLAME.

Numbers xxi. 27–30.

WHILE the whole Pentateuch is inlaid with poetry and song [1], the Book of Numbers is particularly rich in ancient fragments. Some of these are of much interest and beauty, like the 'Song of the Well' just noticed, and all of them help to shed light on the character of the time and the people to which they belong. The genius of poetry was from the first sanctified in Israel to the service of religion, and early took a place in the offices of public worship. This is seen in the form and style of the blessing pronounced over the congregation by the High Priest, Numbers vi. 24–26:—

'The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
The LORD make His countenance shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee:
The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace.'

So too in the chants (Num. x. 35, 36) which were the

[1] Thus the Book of Exodus has what seems a fragment of war-song against Amalek (ch. xvii. 16); and again in ch. xxxii. 18, where it is said to Moses—

'The sound of war is in the camp;'

his reply is couched in a style of lyrical effusion—

'Not the sound of a shout for victory,
Not the sound of a shout for disaster,
But the sound of a shout for rejoicing
Do I hear.'

signal for the Ark to move, when the people journeyed (embodied afterwards in one of the Psalms):—

> 'Arise, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered:
> And let them that hate Thee flee before Thee;'

or for it to rest, when they were about to encamp—

> 'Return, O LORD,
> To the ten thousands of Israel.'

Very remarkable specimens of semi-lyrical poetry are the prophetic effusions of Balaam, in chapters xxiii. and xxiv. of this same book—all the more remarkable that their diction is so refined and finished without detracting from the vividness and vigour of the imagery in which they are clothed. They present a most noticeable contrast to the equally vigorous, but certainly more rugged, language of the poetic snatches which are set alongside the 'Song of the Well' in chapter xxi. The first of these, in verses 14 and 15, seems a rough and hurried ballad-narrative of the fierce struggles of the Arnon. The passage of this river had been stoutly contested, rushing, as it did, through the deep defile or gorge of sandstone rocks which divided the fertile uplands of Sihon, King of the Amorites, from the wilder and barer mountains of Moab and Edom, and affording a splendid line of defence against the invaders. Its name *Arnon* means swift or noisy, and fitly describes the headlong rapid rush of the main stream and its tumultuous hill-tributaries; and the extract from the ballad is like the sound of these very torrents borne impetuously down the rugged gorge, and dashing from pool to pool in cascades of turbid foam. The whole country lying east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan is a vast ridge, more or less sudden and precipitous in its rise to the high table-land of 3000 feet above the sea, or 4000

feet at least above the Dead Sea, and is deeply furrowed by stupendous ravines like Callirrhoe and the Arnon, as well as those further north through Gilead, that send their streams like Jabbok into the Jordan[1].

We can follow the host of Israel step by step as they leave for ever the great eastern and southern desert. They had compassed the land of Edom, which they had not been at liberty to invade or infest (Edom and they being near kindred by descent), and they had also kept east and north of Moab, another kindred race, against whom for the same reason they were not to provoke any hostility either. They were now therefore breaking in from the east upon the first real Canaanitish people, the old Amorites, who had managed to repossess themselves from Moab of the northern tributaries of the Arnon and all the northern side of the gorge, as well as the low-lying meadow-lands along its northern banks; and so 'Arnon is the border of Moab between Moab and the Amorites.' Israel was now bursting in on the Amorites from the north-east, by seizing the tributaries of the Arnon, and pressing down through them to the main gorge of that stream on whose banks stood Aroer and the mysterious city we read of 'in the midst of the river[2].' Hence the snatch from a ballad at verse 14, from the Book of the Wars of the Lord—a book for which there was no dearth of materials now, the course of the Israelites being contested henceforward at every step, and their journey being the constant march of an army in battle array. 'Wherefore (viz. because Israel had carried the passes of the Arnon by the special help of the Lord) it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord,

[1] Few of the streams seem perennial that flow from the *Western* slopes to the Jordan; whereas all on the East, draining from Moab to Gilead, are so, and are filled with fishes and fresh-water shells.

[2] Josh. xiii. 9.

'Vaheb in Suphah[1],
And the valleys of Arnon,
And the slope of the valleys
That inclineth to the dwelling of Ar,
And leaneth upon the border of Moab.'

This is, as it were, the voice or song of the congregation, rehearsing the stages of their progress, acknowledging and expressing the grateful feeling of the tribes on gaining the northern or Gilead side of the great gorge of the Arnon.

Now we pass to the final song of victory over the Amorites, when Israel encountered King Sihon himself in person at Jahaz, and, having thoroughly routed him, got possession of his capital Heshbon, and swept their conquests northward to the strong boundary of the Ammonites at the brook Jabbok. 'Wherefore (after so great a success over Sihon) they that speak in proverbs (they who recite in *Mash'lim* or ballads the feelings of the host) say (Numbers xxi. 27–30):—

Come ye to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon be built and established:
28 For a fire is gone out of Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon:
It hath devoured Ar of Moab,
The lords of the high places of Arnon.
29 Woe to thee, Moab!
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh:
He hath given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
Unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

[1] This is a very difficult form of phrase. 'Suphah' is no doubt applied to the Red Sea elsewhere: but it does not in itself *mean* the Red Sea, and any such reference as the old version 'What He did at the Red Sea' is entirely out of place here. It might possibly mean 'What He did at Suphah,' the reference being to one of the Arnon tributaries. Others would render 'Vaheb (He took) in storm.'

30 We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon,
And we have laid waste even unto Nophah,
Which reacheth unto Medeba.

This is meant to be a bitter, sarcastic, and contemptuous song; scorching and stinging as the war-flame or tongue of fire it celebrates. It begins with what seem words of mocking satire on the part of victorious Israel, as if shouting to the retreating and defeated Amorites, 'Come back again to your capital! Let Sihon give orders to have his own Heshbon restored and rebuilt! We have not overthrown it; no, we have not reduced it to a cinder heap!' Such seems the taunting spirit and the contemptuous tone of Israel shouting after the Amorites, inviting them to repair their demolished city—the far-famed Heshbon. And to edge the taunt with a yet keener blade, the singer seems to refer in the 28th verse to a former war-song of the Amorites themselves, exulting over Moab, into whose territories they had carried fire and sword:—

'Truly a fire did go out from Heshbon,
A flame from Sihon's city,
Which scoured Ar of Moab,
And consumed the lords of the heights of Arnon.'

Truly a successful and right glorious campaign, bringing woe and ruin upon Moab, the people of Chemosh. The Moabites are the sons and daughters of their god Chemosh, who could not, however, protect his children against their Canaanitish foe, Sihon, King of the Amorites, at Heshbon. 'He (Chemosh) gave his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captive slaves into the hands of Sihon and his people.' Verse 29 is thus a mocking glorification of the prowess of Sihon against Moab, so as

the more to enhance the valour of Israel, in conquering these high and mighty invincible Amorites in their turn. For (as the 30th verse seems to mean):

'We burned *them* out,' the proud boast of Israel over the Amorites: 'Heshbon is perished even to Dibon' (the place where the famous Moabite stone was so recently found), 'and *our* wasting of them was to Nophah, with fire as far as Medeba.'

We see how entirely secular is this fragment; how it is couched in the true spirit and temper of warfare: fit enough for the Collection of National War-songs, but not for fuller preservation in the sacred record which is suffused by another spirit.

Designed, no doubt, like other war-songs to fire the enthusiasm and kindle the ardour of Israel, when preparing for their great struggle, its value lies in the light it throws on the martial prowess and daring of the people, so different now from the old slavish feeling and cowardly temper of the tribes on their coming forth out of Egypt.

IV. SONG OF THE BOW.

Song of the Bow.

17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul
18 and over Jonathan his son: and he bade them teach the
children of Judah the song of the bow: behold, it is written
in the book of Jashar.
19 Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!
20 Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
21 Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of
offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.
22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty.
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.
26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
27 How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

SONG OF THE BOW.

2 Samuel i. 17–27.

THIS great lament or funeral dirge is the last of the Secular Songs, and forms a fitting close to them[1]. Such an outburst of strong emotion as we have here, although not based on distinctively religious or godly sentiment, is inexpressibly touching and tender; and it comes down to us laden with three of the noblest elements of natural piety:—PATRIOTISM, LOYALTY, and FRIENDSHIP. These constitute the three divisions of the song, each one having a section to itself. It is extracted from the *Book of Jashar*, and is fitly called the *Song of the Bow;* celebrating as it does the famous bow of Jonathan, by which he did his great exploits and won his reputation with the people, and being probably intended to be sung at the practice of the bow, or to encourage the youth of Israel to emulate Jonathan's skill in its use.

Not only did Jonathan belong to the tribe of Benjamin, which was famous above all others for its archers, but it was by his dextrous skill with this weapon he gained his first victory at Michmash. David's own associations with Jonathan and the bow were memorable and tender. One of his cherished possessions was the bow which Jonathan had given him as a keepsake and token of friendship, after the overthrow of Goliath. And when

[1] There is also David's brief but touching threnody for Abner, two chapters later, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34, when treacherously slain by Joab, and when 'the king lamented for Abner, and said,

'Should Abner die as a fool dieth?
Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters:
As a man falleth before the children of iniquity, so didst thou fall.'

they had at last to separate because of the jealousy of Saul, was it not by the skilful flight of arrows by the stone Ezel that Jonathan conveyed a timely warning?

From the structure of the song, especially from the unequal length of the strophes, it does not seem to have come to us in its original entirety, but only so much as may afford a true idea of its scope and spirit as a mighty and majestic dirge. Its lyric grandeur is patent to all, and like every true work of genius it has inspired other genius of various orders, as, for example, those solemn strains of threnody, 'the dead march' in *Saul*, under whose sounds so many of the famous ones of earth have been borne to their burial. After the opening wail of its pealing refrain over fallen greatness,

> 'Thy glory, O Israel (or as some render it, The gazelle, the wild roe, of Israel), is slain upon thy high places!
> How are the mighty fallen!'

The NATIONAL DISASTER is the foremost and the supreme burden of the singer's lament. What the song breathes first of all, and sets in the forefront, is

I.

THE SPIRIT OF ARDENT PATRIOTISM. This is what glows and kindles in the first strophe with its mighty wail:—

20 Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
21 Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.
22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,

The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

Here, it is the sentiment of the country's honour; it is a sense of the country's loss; it is the need of guarding the nation's name and fame at such a crisis, that is the singer's prime concern. The first and most urgent necessity, he feels, is to evoke the thrill of common sympathy and national unity. Everything depended on the tribes rising in an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm, and uniting as one man against the common foe. The chief thing to be dreaded was apathy on the one hand, or panic on the other. Were they to succumb to terror and pay inglorious tribute to the enemy? or were they to rally at once and organise victory out of defeat, and thereby 'turn the battle to the gate'? David feels it needful to touch the tenderest chords in the nation's memory and rouse them to an agony of resistance against the Philistines. This was no time for petty tribal jealousies or for idle personal recriminations—the sure forerunner of even worse or more fatal disasters. David seeks, therefore, in this strain to kindle anew the fires of martial prowess, and counteract the despondency and despair that might settle down on the people after so terrible a blow. He will wake up old memories and associations, so as to cast a potent spell over the deepest and strongest susceptibilities of the nation.

Hence, the exquisite pathos and the melting power of the opening lines, 'Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.' Hence, too, the animating force of the adjuration, which succeeds the words of wailing—'Hills of Gilboa! no dew rest on you, nor rain on you,

ye fields rich in oblations!' We must understand that the verse is unfinished. The adjuring of hill and dale is left to supply its own supplement—something like this: 'Let no dews rest on Gilboa, nor rain descend on the valley of the plain, till we have retrieved the national disaster and redeemed the country's credit and honour; for *there*—there on that terrible field, the shield of the mighty lies rusting, the shield of Saul no longer anointed with oil.' The meaning of this might naturally enough have been supposed to be: 'The shield of Saul was thrown away, as though he had never been an anointed king;' but the phrase 'anointed with oil' cannot grammatically apply to Saul, but to the shield. Light is cast on the sense by a reference to Isaiah xxi. 5: 'Arise, ye princes, anoint the shield;' where we gather that the worst disgrace of a warrior-chief was to have a rusty shield, not burnished and glittering with the polish of oil. Thus the poet touches to the very quick the martial susceptibilities of the people, by reminding them that their national, their representative, their own royal shield lies rusty on that fatal hill-side, just as he touches their best religious feelings by recalling that the richest offerings and first-fruits for the use of the sanctuary and the nation's altar, were most plentifully supplied from the neighbourhood of Gilboa, above other corners of the land.

The associations thus conjured up were fitted to work as a potent spell. The scene of the battle overlooks one of the most blood-stained spots of earth; and the heights on which Saul and his sons were slain, have re-echoed with the war-shouts of greater varieties of combatants, perhaps, than any other equally limited area[1].

[1] See page 108.

Saul had felt his own battle here must be one of life and death. Clinging to the hills with that instinctive sense of advantage they might afford, he and his little army had become the more conspicuous mark for the terrible arrows of the Philistine archers on the slopes. The danger and disaster alike were fearful. The rout had been complete and dreadful. 'The men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa.'

> 'Hills of Gilboa, never may
> You offerings pay,
> No morning dew nor fruitful showers
> Clothe you with flowers:
> Saul and his sons there made a spoil:
> The shield untouched with sacred oil.'

But one grand redeeming feature was this—that neither Saul, nor his sons, nor the people at large, had shown any lack of prowess or courage; the leaders had exposed themselves in the thickest of the fight, and Israel had been overthrown by sheer force of numbers and by overwhelming odds. Saul and Jonathan had especially signalised their daring and prowess, though without avail; rushing to the forefront with a kind of frenzy of despair, only to fall together on the same fatal field. 'From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.' But it was a fruitless struggle. Though swifter than eagles and stronger than lions, they were fated to ill-success, and they went down together. 'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they were not divided.' Defeated, awfully and disastrously defeated though they were, one consolation remained—they were not disgraced. They died in harness, leaving in their last sad battle-field, 'no blot on their fame,' as true patriot-warriors and brave and gallant soldiers.

II.

THE SPIRIT OF LOYALTY, which breathes in the second strophe, is the next most striking thing after patriotism in this grand lament. David's deep and leal-hearted attachment to Saul, as the first anointed and first chosen king of Israel, mingles with and grows out of his sentiments of patriotism. Saul is here remembered and honoured with the distinction due both to his official and personal pre-eminence. There is something sublimely magnanimous in the tone of David's references to his now extinguished persecutor, laid low in death.

24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!

Can anything be more noble than this anxiety of David to pay respect to the name and memory of the great departed? What more beautiful and touching as an illustration of the sentiment, 'Say nothing but good of the dead'? Oh, beautiful! that in the holy presence of death David has learned to forget and forgive his wrongs; dwelling on the better side and grander qualities of Saul's character, oblivious, for the time, to his miserable faults and failures. His courage and energy in war, his happy co-operation with Jonathan, and the beautiful union between father and son, in even the last extremities of their going down together to the grave of heroes, with all their daring and grand courage: these, with his gigantic stature, his kingly bearing and martial prowess, stand forth upon the canvas with striking vividness. And what a touch of tender yet wild and passionate wailing lurks in the appeal to the daughters of Israel, whom Saul had clothed in the rich

spoil of war and advanced in all the elegancies and ornaments of feminine life. And 'the mighty had fallen *in the midst of the battle!*' another touch this of tenderness in David's noble sorrow. Death, no doubt, makes the hardest heart tenderer, and blots out the memories of injuries and wrongs. But there is something unusually magnanimous in David's manifestation of the God-like forgiving spirit, wiping out as it does, in one great act of oblivion, the memory of whole years of persecution and injustice, and rising in this great ode of sorrow to the highest reach of generosity.

For to David, with his heart true to the theocratic constitution of the kingdom, Saul was in very deed 'the LORD'S anointed.' Loyalty to Saul was therefore part of David's faith; the fruit of his reverence for the appointments of the divine will. Hence, his noble forbearance once and again toward Saul when he had him in his power, while being hunted by the infatuated and guilty king like a partridge on the mountains. Hence, his putting away from him the opportunity and temptation of revenge against his mortal foe—'The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed.' So David ever deadened and checked the spirit of disloyalty or of personal vengeance. And by what fatal and astonishing experience the miserable young Amalekite felt the power of this loyal principle in David! Seeking spoil on the battle-field, the wandering Amalekite had found the dead body of Saul; and plucking off the crown and bracelet by which it was distinguished, and hurrying away to Ziklag to tell David, he crouched before him, as if the first to do lowly obeisance to him and hail him first as king; then lyingly averred he had himself slain Saul, thinking thereby to gain the higher reward. But he might have

read his fate in that glare of ineffable disdain and indignation from David's flashing eye. He! the base caitiff, an accursed son of Amalek besides, to tell David he had put forth his villain hand against the Lord's anointed! His shrift was short and his doom speedy. Ah, what passionate and real affection lodged in David's heart for Saul, if Saul had only thought so! How the woe-begone expression of the distracted monarch, and the clouded look on that royal brow, had moved the young minstrel's heart to anxious sympathy, while the occasional gleams of generous feeling from the recovering king had kindled the responsive thrillings of delight!

And now the old attachment, which Saul had done so much to kill, has revived again in all its pristine ardour; and seeks vent in a gush of unaffected regard and admiration, all the more strong and irrepressible that it has been so long restrained, and is now set free in this noblest and most pathetic of all refrains, 'How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!'

III.

The last strophe—briefest but strongest—is a passionate outburst of FRIENDSHIP for Jonathan.

25 O Jonathan, slain upon thy high places!
26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

For purity, fidelity, and romantic associations, the attachment of David and Jonathan is unrivalled in story, and has become proverbial through all the ages. 'The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David,

and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.' Jonathan saw in David a piety, a patriotism, and a prowess, which made him yield his heart to the finest impulses of a true affection, without a shade of rivalry, jealousy, or envy; Jonathan's attachment was disinterested, generous and unselfish. The friendship had evidently originated with Jonathan, the elder of the two, and far above David in rank and consideration. And if the king's son had apparently nothing to gain from the son of Jesse, he saw in David a true hero and the coming man, and he felt the charm of David's noble character and aims. It was a friendship which David knew how to appreciate and reciprocate.

> 'He was rich, and I was poor,
> And he supplied my wants the more,
> That his unlikeness fitted mine.'

When Saul's heart was kindled in mad fury against David, in what a perplexing and delicate position was Jonathan placed! Yet how constant and faithful he remained to his friend, without, however, acting in any way the unfilial part! Few more touching incidents can anywhere be found than when, being forced to separate at the stone Ezel, it might be for brief space, it might be for ever, 'They kissed one another, and wept one with the other till David exceeded'; or when, in their final interview, as it proved, in the forest of Ziph, Jonathan ministered to David's religious comfort and necessity, and 'strengthened his hand in God.'

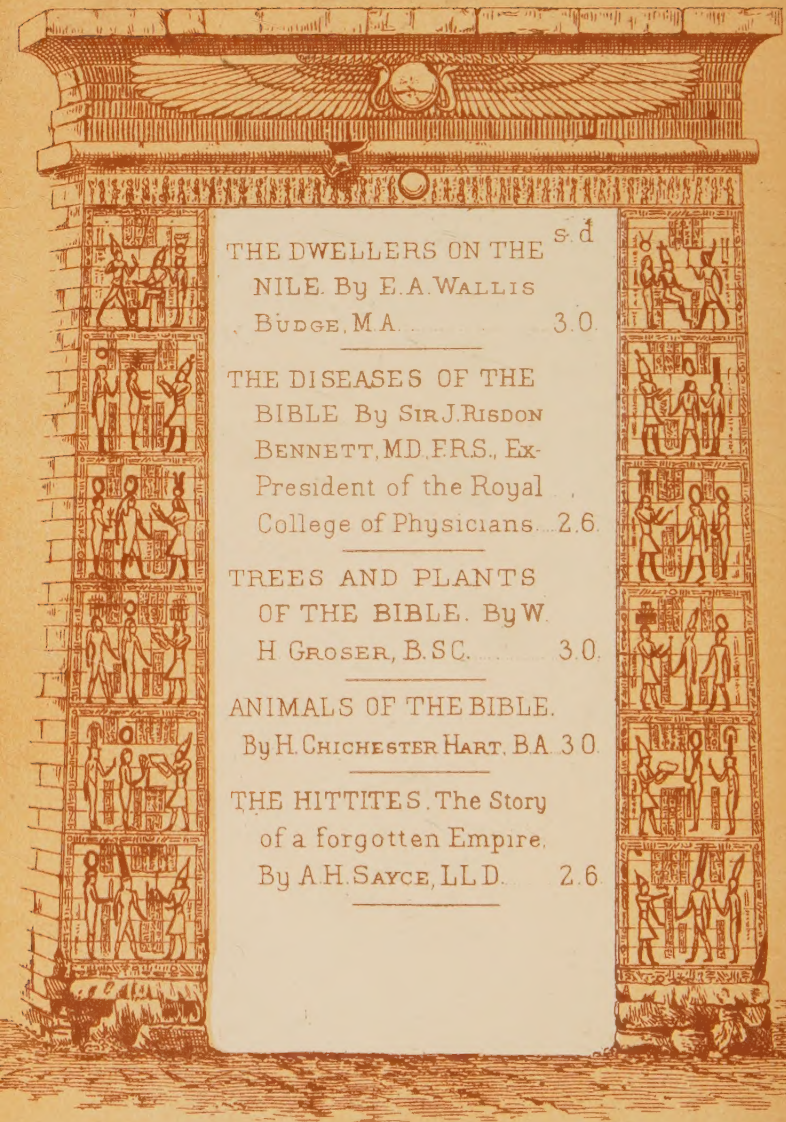
> 'Much beautiful and excellent and fair
> Was seen beneath the sun: but nought was seen
> More beautiful or excellent or fair
> Than face of faithful friend: fairest when seen
> In darkest day: and many sounds were sweet,

Most ravishing and pleasant to the ear;
But sweeter none than voice of faithful friend;
Sweet always, and sweetest heard in loudest storm.'

Of such a friendship David had felt the sweet experience. With full and overflowing heart he cherishes its sunny memories. And now, reflecting on all the past, he says, tenderly and with a softened meltingness, 'Very pleasant wast thou to me. Thy love to me was *wonderful*.' It had been often a solace to him when a fugitive; a light and joy to him in many a dark and cloudy day, sustaining and cheering him when heart and flesh fainted and failed. It inspired him to show kindness to the children and the children's children of his early friend, and now it inspires him to pour forth his soul in this lament for the departed, in strains of passionate and absorbing grief—the very 'pathos and sublime' of all undying friendships which have in them the seeds of immortality.

'Nor sink such stars in empty night;
They lose themselves in heaven's own light.'

THE END.



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